THE ROVING CRITIC

CARL VAN DOREN

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THE ROVING CRITIC

CARL VAN DOREN

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CONTENTS

I. TOWARD A CREED

A FOURTH DIMENSION IN CRITICISM 15
THE REVENGE OF THE BARDS 21
CREATIVE READING 27

II. THREE OF OUR CONQUERORS

THE POETICAL CULT OF LINCOLN 35
WHITMAN IN HIS CRISES 40
THE LION AND THE UNIFORM 45

III. TWO NOTES ON YOUTH

THE RELEASE OF YOUTH 59
YOUTH IS ALWAYS RIGHT 63

IV. HOWELLS: MAY 1920

EULOGIUM 69

V. NOOKS AND FRINGES

ON HATING THE PROVINCES 83
WHAT THE FATHERS READ 87
THE KIND MOTHER OF US ALL 92
MOCHA DICK 97
FOLK-LORE IN KENTUCKY 100
PAUL BUNYAN GOES WEST 105
THE WORST AMERICAN BOOK 108
AT THE SATURDAY CLUB 114
THE SILVER AGE OF OUR LITERATURE 121
JOHN BURROUGHS 125
BROAD HOUSE AND NARROW HOUSE 128
GOOD NAMES 133
PICTURES OF THE PAST 142
THE GREAT LABORATORY 146

CONTENTS

VI. LONG ROADS

THE COSMIC IRONIES 153
JUSTICE OR MELODRAMA 158
THE CORRUPTION OF COMFORT 162
"GOD IS NOT DEAD OF OLD AGE" 167

VII. SHORT CUTS

PETIT UP TO THIRTY 175
IN LIEU OF THE LAUREATE 180
"MURDERING BEAUTY" 183
CHAIRS 186
INISHMORE, INISHMAAN, INISHEER 189
SWEETNESS OR LIGHT 192
CROWNING THE BISHOP 195

VIII. A CASUAL SHELF

HONESTY IS A GIFT 199
GOLDEN LYRICS 202
THE CHRISTIAN DIPLOMAT 205
LAWYER AND ELEGIST 207
WOMEN IN LOVE 209
MOSES IN MASSACHUSETTS 212
BROWN GIRLS 215
INVENTION AND VERACITY 217
A HERO WITH HIS POSSE 219
MARIA AND BATOUALA 221
STUPID SCANDAL 224
THE MUSE OF KNICKERBOCKER 228

IX. POETS' CORNER

GREEK DIGNITY AND YANKEE EASE 231
THROUGH ELLIS ISLAND 238
TAP-ROOT OR MELTING-POT 244

X. IN THE OPEN

AUGUST NIGHTS AND AUGUST DAYS 251
LAKE AND BIRD 256
FIREFLIES IN CORNWALL 258
GARDENS 260

THE ROVING CRITIC

I. TOWARD A CREED

A FOURTH DIMENSION IN CRITICISM

CRITICISM ordinarily asks about literature one of three questions: "Is it good?" "Is it true?" "Is it beautiful?" Each of these questions, of course, permits the widest range in the critic. He may be so simple as to think a given work is not good when it fails to emphasize some truism or when it violates the sort of poetic justice which children in the nursery are mistaught to expect; he may be so complex as to demand from literature the subtlest casuistries concerning moral problems; he may be so perverse as to wince at the first symptom of any plain contrast between good and evil. If it be the true which exercises him, he may sink so low as to be worried over this or that surface error in his author—such as an anachronism or a blunder in botany or mechanics; he may rise so high as to discuss on an equal plane with a great authority the difficult questions what the nature of truth may be or whether there is after all any such thing as truth. Or, holding beauty uppermost in his mind, he may at the one extreme peck at a masterpiece because it departs from some traditional form or at the other extreme may view it under the light of an eternity of beauty and feel satisfied if he can perceive and identify the masterpiece's peculiar reflection. Yet

wide as these ranges are, they can all be reduced to the three questions and they mark what may be called the three dimensions of criticism.

There is, however, a fourth dimension—to continue the analogy—which comes into the account when a critic asks about literature: "Is it alive?" In a sense this query includes all the others and in a sense it transcends them. Odysseus is not good: he is adulterous and crafty; Faust is not good: he sells his soul for the sake of forbidden power; Gargantua is not good: he buffets and tumbles the decencies in all directions; Henry V is not good: he wastes his youth and wages unjust war; Huckleberry Finn is not good: he is a thief and a liar. The heroes, the demigods, the gods themselves occasionally step aside from the paths into which men counsel one another; there are at least as many great stories about gorgeous courtesans as about faithful wives. It is not the "goodness" of all such literature but the vividness that gives it its perennial impact. Better a lively rogue than a deadly saint.

To a different extent the same thing appears when truthfulness is concerned. There is a vitality which lies back both of naturalism and of romance and which communicates itself through books as dissimilar, say, as *Madame Bovary* and *The Faerie Queene*—one of them the most fastidious document and one of them the most spacious dream. The gods of Homer are not real; the history of Virgil will not bear scrutiny; Dante wanders in a maze of superstitions; Shakespeare lets his plots take him almost where they like;

the machinery of a folk-tale is good enough for Goethe, as it was for the author of the Book of Job. How many cosmogonies, Bernard Shaw points out, have gone to the dust heap in spite of an accuracy superior to that which keeps Genesis alive through cynical centuries! The looser Molière is in the long run no less convincing than the tighter Ibsen. Swift and Voltaire and Lucian, twitting their worlds for their follies, dare every extravagance of invention without serious penalty. Ariosto with his whimsical paladins and Scott with his stately aristocrats and Dickens with his hearty democratic caricatures and Dostoevsky with his tortured souls—to find a common denominator of truth among them is so hard that the critics who attempt it are likely to end in partisanship for this or that one and to assign the others to a station outside the approved class. Yet an author may be killed a dozen times with the charge of untruthfulness and still live.

And concerning beauty the disagreement of the doctors is unending and unendable. Whitman is now called beautiful and now called ugly; so are Browning, and Hugo, and Tolstoi, and Nietzsche, and Lope de Vega, and Leopardi, and Catullus, and Aristophanes. Moreover, by any aesthetic standard which the judgment can arrive at, any one of these authors is sometimes beautiful and sometimes not. Nor does it finally matter, as it did not finally matter that Socrates had a thick body and a pug-face. The case of Socrates illustrates the whole argument. Was he

good? There was so great a difference on this point among the critics of his time that the majority of them, translating their conclusion into action, put him to death as dangerous to the state. Was what he taught the truth? It is of course not easy to disentangle the actual Socrates from the more or less polemic versions of him which Xenophon and Plato furnish, but it seems clear that he had his share of unscientific notions and individual prejudices and mistaken doctrines. Was he beautiful? He confused Greek orthodoxy by being so uncomely and yet so great. But whatever his shortcomings in these regards, no one ever doubted that he was alive—alive in body and mind and character, alive in war and peace and friendship and controversy, alive in bed or at table. Life was concentrated in him; life spoke out of him.

So with literature, which collects, transmutes, and utters life. It may represent the good, may speak the truth, may use the modes of beauty—any one or all of these things. Call the good the bow which lends the power; call the truth the string which fixes the direction; call the beautiful the arrow which wings and stings. But there is still the arm in which the true life of the process lies. Or, to change the figure, one of those gods who in the mythologies model men out of clay may have good clay and a true purpose and may shape his figure beautifully; but there is still the indispensable task of breathing the breath of life into it before it will wake and go its own course and

continue its breed to other generations. Life is obviously what makes the difference between human sculpture and divine creation; it is the same element which makes the difference between good literature and dead literature.

The critic who is aware of this fourth dimension of the art he studies saves himself the effort which critics less aware contrive to squander in trying to explain their art in terms merely of the three dimensions. He knows that life began before there were such things as good and evil; that it surges through both of them; that it will probably outlast any particular conception of either one or the other: he knows that it is not the moral of so naïve a tale as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which makes it moving but the life which was breathed into it by fiery passion. He knows that the amount of truth in poetry need not always be great and often indeed is much exaggerated; that a ruthless hand can find heaps of theological slag in Milton and corners full of metaphysical cobwebs in Plato and glittering excrescences of platitude in Shakespeare: he knows that these poets now live most in those parts of their work in the creating of which they were most alive. He knows that a powerful imagination may beget life even upon ugliness: he knows it because he has felt the vibrations of reality in Browning's cranky grotesques and in Whitman's long-drawn categories and in Rabelais's great dung-cart piled high with every variety of insolence and wisdom. Not goodness alone nor truth alone nor beauty alone nor all of them in

one of their rare fusions can be said to make great literature, though these are the tools of that hard trade. Great literature may be known by the sign that it communicates the sense of the vividness of life. And it communicates it because its creators were alive with it at the moment of creation.

There are many kinds of literature because there are many kinds of life. Pope felt one kind and Wordsworth another and Poe another—and so on and on. There are no universal poets, not even Homer and Shakespeare. Nor, of course, are there any universal critics, not even Lessing and Sainte-Beuve. Neither creator nor critic can make himself universal by barely taking thought about it; he *is* what he *lives*. The measure of the creator is the amount of life he puts into his work. The measure of the critic is the amount of life he finds there.

THE REVENGE OF THE BARDS

"The natural desire of every man," says Peacock in *The Four Ages of Poetry,* "to engross to himself as much power and property as he can acquire by any of the means which might makes right, is accompanied by the no less natural desire of making known to as many people as possible the extent to which he has been a winner in this universal game. The successful warrior becomes a chief; the successful chief becames a king; his next want is an organ to disseminate the fame of his achievements and the extent of his possessions; and this organ he finds in a bard, who is always ready to celebrate the strength of his arm, being duly inspired by that of his liquor. This is the origin of poetry. . . . The first rude songs of all nations . . . tell us how many battles such an one has fought, how many helmets he has cleft, how many breastplates he has pierced, how many widows he has made, how much land he has appropriated, how many houses he has demolished for other people, what a large one he has built for himself, how much gold he has stowed away in it, and how liberally and plentifully he pays, feeds, and intoxicates the divine and immortal bards, the sons of Jupiter, but for whose everlasting songs the names of heroes would perish."

The bards meanwhile, according to Peacock, do not neglect their own status. "They are observing and thinking, while others are robbing and fighting: and though their object be nothing more than to secure a share of the spoil, yet they accomplish this end by intellectual, not by physical, power: their success excites emulation to the attainment of intellectual eminence: thus they sharpen their own wits and awaken those of others. . . . Their familiarity with the secret history of gods and genii obtains for them, without much difficulty, the reputation of inspiration . . . being indeed often themselves (as Orpheus and Amphion) regarded as portions and emanations of divinity: building cities with a song, and leading brutes with a symphony; which are only metaphors for the faculty of leading multitudes by the nose."

This is the revenge of the bards: from singing of godlike men they come to feel themselves godlike; and in time they persuade a respectable portion of the community to take them at their own value. Now it is their turn to share—almost to usurp—the glory of the kings and warriors their former patrons. Homer takes as high a rank as Agamemnon and Achilles and Ulysses, who are remembered because Homer admitted them to his narrative. The bard establishes the canon of the memorable. May there not have been other men as wise as Moses or as patient as Job or as strong as Samson? There may have been, but as they lacked bards they dropped out of the race for peren-

nial honor. That race, at least, is not for the swift alone. Socrates had a better bard than Pericles; he had Plato. Caesar had a better bard than Pompey: he had himself. If there were more Caesars, history might be different; certainly historiography would be. As it is, accident and art play an enormous part in fixing human fame.

The process continues to the present day, for the biographer who has succeeded to the bard has the bard's habits in no very different degree. But he is no longer quite so dependent as his ancestor, no longer quite so official. Like will to like in biography as elsewhere. So long as the craft of making reputations is left to the guild of letters, so long will the guild impress it with its special prejudices. It will choose to write about those great men whose careers best conform to some classic type or fit some dramatic mode or flatter some literary sentiment. A great man who has been a conspicuous patron of the arts has ten times the chances at posterity that a mere man of power or money has; but so has a great man who has been eloquent or who has borne himself like Cato or who has had a fate in some way or other resembling Napoleon's.

Not only does the literary guild choose men of action on literary grounds to write about: it chooses disproportionately to write about its members. There are as many lives of thinkers and artists as of generals and monarchs. Philostratus wrote about the sophists and Eunapius and Diogenes Laertius about

the philosophers and Suetonius about the grammarians; in the Middle Ages monks wrote particularly about monks who succeeded in their business and turned saints; Vasari in the Renaissance said less about even the princes who encouraged painters than about the painters themselves; Boswell chose not Burke nor Chatham but Johnson to stand as the centre of his society; Goethe's Duke survives primarily in the various lives of Goethe; how many passionate, beautiful books there are about Poe and Keats and Byron and Heine and Hugo and Pushkin and Leopardi!

The situation has consequences. Though the king who can command a poet or the politician who can catch a biographer will always have one, few other persons outside the poet's or the biographer's own caste boast any such intercessors with the future. The most mighty man of business perishes from the public memory almost as speedily as the most petty trader. The artisan who has invented no matter how comfortable devices and the athlete who has been no matter how much on the tongues of men leave but short wakes of fame behind them. Now this may hint that those who do not survive actually merit oblivion, but it does not prove it. Rather, it proves that peoples have the best memories with regard to those men and women about whom there are voices to go on speaking. In any given generation rumour widens out in various ways: its heroes are pugilists and saints and misers and entertainers and generals and

statesmen and orators and preachers and lovers and murderers and philanthropists and scholars and poets and humorists and musicians and detectives—all mingled in one vast confusion. But with posterity selection intervenes. A hundred fames grow dim because no one has a special reason for perpetuating them; word of mouth in general is not enough. Even particular professions in time forget those who once practised them eminently. Only of the men of letters—bards and biographers—is it the trade as well as the delight to keep old reputations burning. And it is only certain things that they remember: blood and glory and learning. Paul Revere gave a lifetime to a noble craft and a few hours all told to a midnight ride which any man might have made who was able to sit a horse and follow a dark road. Who now hears of Revere's craft? He is merely a demigod and Longfellow is his prophet; the two of them symbolize the past, as most men see it, and the way of the bards with the past.

For it is clear, upon reflection, that just as the current world comes to the perceptions of mankind through the interpretations of artists or demagogues or prophets, so the past comes to them through the interpretations of its chroniclers. There lies the past, enormous and unformed; here are the men of pen and book who make the lenses through which it is perceived, who fix the frame of the picture, who choose what shall be looked at and what not. They are artists and the past is their material. Let a given

chronicler be as honest as he can or will be; he is still a member of a limited class of men and he is interested in a limited range of life. Let all the chroniclers be honest, and they are still chroniclers: they will set down what interests their caste. They will shape their material in epic or dramatic form; they will find arguments for their favourite convictions; they will cherish or neglect in accordance with their dispositions. Sophisticate and complicate the matter as they will, they tend in all ages and the latest age to do what they did at first. They see the rulers of men sitting on their proper thrones and they sing in verse or say in prose how those rulers came there; they remember themselves and they pay natural honour to their fellows of the guild. In a sense, the plain man cannot feel that he has a past. He looks into histories and sees very little of the world he knows. That older world is much too full of kings and bards for him to feel at home.

CREATIVE READING

As surely as there is such a thing as creative writing there is such a thing as creative reading. That it is not very common appears from the universal demand for fiction, in which the creative process has already been applied to the material in hand, so that the reader is called upon to contribute very little himself. Indeed, if the writer of fiction is strong enough he can carry his more compliant readers to almost any distance from the world of their experience and can persuade them to accept as its equal or as its superior some merely invented region. To go so far with a romancer is not, as is often thought, a necessary sign that the reader is imaginative: he may be only limp or uncritical, unable to hold his own in the presence of a more powerful fancy. Children are regularly beguiled in this fashion, as are the credulous of all ages by travellers and politicians and priests who have a romantic turn of mind. The creative reader, however, begins to build the minute he begins to read. In varying degrees, of course, he leans upon his writer, but he takes profit from his book in proportion to the amount of creative energy he puts into it. Perhaps the simplest illustration of this is to be noted in the fact that one reads a book with different results at

different times. A reader, for instance, who has never been in love cannot find in a play or poem, a novel or biography portraying the effects of love, more than a fraction of what he would find there if he had genuinely known the passion. Another who has thought the history of some foreign country dull may discover that it is fascinating after he has visited that country. And still another may suddenly perceive a large pertinence in ideas or speculations which heretofore have left him cold: he has in his own person caught up with them, and now greets them heartily for the first time though they have been there in the book all the time.

The notion that unhappy men and women employ reading as an anodyne is not quite accurate. With them reading furnishes more than a substitute for thought; it furnishes them the occasion to set going in their minds a dance of images, a sequence of ideas, a march of memories which run parallel to the matter of the book, and to which the book, indeed, may be but the exciting cause. Neither is it quite accurate to say that inveterate readers, happy or unhappy, lead their lives within the pages of this volume or that for want of the more robust outlet which action affords those who do not care to read, or at least to read so much. Rather, such readers may be full of creative impulses which they prefer to exercise in a purer and more plastic universe than they have found elsewhere. There happens to be no standard by which to measure the relative value of the forces

which are released by action and of those which are released by contemplation. If the man of action is associated in his career with other active persons, why may not the man of contemplation be equally associated in his with others whose society he enjoys through the medium of printed words? As there are men of action who drive blindly forward, without thought, to some goal which they hardly see though their instincts urge them in that general direction, so there are men of contemplation who drift with the tide of some—or any—poet or historian or philosopher without critical resistance; but the creative reader challenges, disputes, denies, fights his way through his book, and he emerges to some extent always another person. He has been a creator while he seemed to be merely passive and recipient.

To take another easy illustration, a scholar engaged in actual research may wade through rivers and climb mountains of books while in the pursuit of proofs for his thesis, and may yet at every step be full of creative fire, throwing aside what he does not need and choosing what he does as emphatically as if he were a soldier on the most difficult campaign. The researcher is but a common type of creative reader, his process and his aim being more readily comprehensible than those of the other types but not essentially unlike them. All creative readers have at any given moment some conscious or unconscious thesis which they are seeking to prove, some conscious or unconscious picture they desire to complete, some con-

scious or unconscious point they mean to reach if they can. By it they are sustained through what would be unendurable labour to another, or even to them at an earlier or a later day. It gives them resoluteness, it gives them form. More potent than has been ordinarily recognized, it belongs with that faculty whereby the mind arranges its impressions in some sort of order and comes to some kind of conclusion without always consulting the will or even inviting the consciousness to be aware of what is going on.

The token by which the creative reader can best be known is his lack of the pedantic expectation with which many readers of considerable taste begin to read. For instance, there was that professorial critic, for whom no pillory can be too high or naked or windy, who declared he could not approve of *The Playboy of the Western World* because it was neither tragedy nor comedy nor tragi-comedy. He did not create as he read; he could not even follow a free representation of human life; he was tied brain and mood to a prejudice which shut him in from any liberation by novel wit or beauty. Like many better men, he was a victim of an obsession for the classics into which creative readers never allow themselves to fall. They may have formed their literary principles upon the strictest canon and they may be richly responsive to the great traditions of style and structure; but they have not been made timid by their training and they know that the heartiest reader, like the

heartiest spectator of human affairs, must occasionally have his fling outside narrow circles or must begin to stifle. It is as snobbish to feel at home only among the "best" books as to feel at home only among the "best" people. After all, the best books have been made up out of diverse elements, transmuted by some creative spirit from the raw materials which lay around. The reader who in some degree can share that spirit's vision can share also its delight in the same sort of original stuff. Imagine, for example, the state of mind of a person who can argue that it is a weakness, if not a literary impropriety, to prefer Goethe's conversations with Eckermann at times to *Faust*.

There are very proper moods which the noblest work of art cannot satisfy as well as some casual memoir, some quaint history or book of travel, some halting speculation, some mere array of facts. Who has not preferred the nasturtiums or turnips of his own garden to more sumptuous flowers or vegetables from the open market? The pleasant odours of many mornings and the colour of many fine sunsets cling about the blossoms which he has tended; the plain roots from his soil have in them the savour of honest sweat and the contour of agreeable hopes. So the creative reader likes frequently to shape his own designs and make his own conclusions out of raw materials which no other hand—however better he may know it is—has worked with. In fact, it is now and then hard for a reader in the full strength of some

creative impulse to keep himself as aware of the positive aesthetic merit of what he is reading as perhaps he should. If the matter of life is there in large abundance he may overlook the lack of form and proportion and interpretation because he is himself able to supply them. It is for this reason that generous spirits like Sir Walter Scott, and even more rigid critics, seem often to have gone too far in their praise of this or that book which has not survived or pleased as much as they expected; they were misled by finding in the book an element of creation which they had contributed but which colder readers do not find there. If criticism, professional or amateur, were an exact science, practised in a vacuum, the creative reader by his vagaries might deserve the accusation of being a sort of astrologer among the scientists; but it is not, and so his more creative vagaries must be classed less with the winds of bad doctrine than with the breath of life.

II. THREE OF OUR CONQUERORS

THE POETICAL CULT OF LINCOLN

WHEN Secretary Stanton at the bedside of Lincoln declared that the dead man now belonged to the ages, he had a vision which was probably not without melodrama, not without the large pomp and plumage which went in the sixties with the expectation of renown. He must have seen rows of ample bronze statues in innumerable parks, where togaed or equestrian Lincolns would look blandly down, mindful of the dignity of history, upon a reverent people hushed in part by the very weight of the metal which commemorated the great man. It is after all too much to have hoped from Stanton that he could foresee how familiar fame would be with Lincoln, how colloquially it would treat him on the one hand, and on the other how quickly it would make him out not an iron demigod, or a wooden hero, but a friendly saint, an immanent presence, a continual comforter. Richard Henry Stoddard, in his *Horatian Ode* written almost at the first news, was not even sure that Lincoln was great: he saw in him a curious epitome of the people, a genius who had risen from them yet safely stood above their variable antipathies and affections. A consciousness of class sounds also in Lowell's more impassioned lines, though the *Commemoration Ode*

perceives the nation not as divided within itself into grades and ranks but as united upon a common ground of simple humanity against the ingenuities and insubstantialities of feudal caste. It remained for Whitman to disregard all thought of Lincoln's modest origins and to utter, without argument or doctrine, the intimate grief of the great American poet of the age for the great American leader, the cautious-handed, gentle, plain, just, resolute, the sweetest, wisest soul, the natural captain who had brought in the victor ship from her fearful voyage.

No such memorable utterance rendered at the moment, or has rendered since, proper tribute to the aspects of Lincoln which on the whole have most touched the daily memories of his fellow-countrymen: his habit of humour and his habit of pardons. Everywhere in the North, but particularly on his own frontier, he was, even in 1865, reputed for his mirth—for his illuminating repartee and his swift, homely, pertinent apologues. Lincoln stories multiplied, many of them gathered year by year in tolerant volumes which paid no attention to any canon; and still others, often too indelicate for type, clustered about his name through their casual ascription to him by narrators who wanted the effect of his authority. Our folk-lore is permeated with anecdotes of this description. And side by side with them go other tales of a sentimental sort, tales of wives who went begging to him for the lives of their husbands under military sentence, and of plain, dull, sad old mothers who pled—never in vain

by the popular records—for sons who had slept on sentry post almost in the face of the enemy. Of all folk-heroes Lincoln most strikingly unites a reputation for wit with a reputation for mercy. The American folk has done nothing more imaginative, and nothing more revealing, than to build up this tender, merry myth.

In the hands of our newest poets, however, the myth is changing both outlines and dimensions. Lincoln's laughter has lost something of its rusticity since we have ceased to live so close to frontier conditions. To Edwin Arlington Robinson, who has cut as in steel his conception of Lincoln the smiling god, the laconic Olympian, that laughter was only a cryptic mirth with which a sage met the rancour of blind gentlemen, sullen children who had to be taught what they could not understand until it should be too late to acknowledge that their master had after all been right and they pitifully wrong. The homespun mantle which Lincoln originally wore in the myth has entirely fallen away, as Mr. Robinson perceives him; and with it have gone both the buffoonery of so much of the popular tradition and the sentimental humanitarianism. What survives is the elemental, ancient matter of heroic genius and wisdom. By this sense of the cosmic elements which shaped his hero Mr. Robinson stands in the centre of the latest Lincoln cult, a cult which has the distinction of bringing the most revolutionary and most reactionary poets together to pay equal honours to the sole American whom they all agree to honour.

Lowell struck this note tentatively when he spoke of the sweet clay from the West out of which nature had chosen to fashion the new hero who should be less a lonely mountain-peak than a broad, genial, friendly prairie. Edwin Markham more fully analyzed him: the tried clay of the common road, warmed by the earth, and dashed through with prophecy and laughter; the colour and tang and odour of primal substances, with a dozen virtues caught from external nature. This rhetoric John Gould Fletcher translates into a subtler language in his massive image of Lincoln as a gaunt, scraggly pine which has its roots so deep down in the very foundations of human life, in the old unshakable wisdom and knowledge and goodness and happiness, that wind and weather cannot hurt it and that a nation of men may safely rest in its shade.

The image is finely illustrative of a common attitude taken toward Lincoln during the late war, when men constantly turned to him, more by far than most people realized, for words which would quiet their bitter fears and doubts, and for instructions how to act in a time so nearly parallel to his. He was the symbol and seal of American unity; he was the American proof that greatness may emerge from the people; he was the American evidence that supreme nobility may come very close to normal love and comprehension. Vachel Lindsay, in Lincoln's own Springfield, gave true voice to this feeling in the poem which speaks of Lincoln as so stirred even in death by the horrors which alarmed

the universe that he could not sleep but walked up and down through the midnight streets, mourning and brooding over the violent dangers as in the days when he himself bore the burden of a similar, however smaller, strife. It is precisely thus, in less critical ages, that saints are said to appear at difficult moments, to quiet the waves or turn the arrow aside. These more vulgar manifestations Mr. Lindsay naturally did not use. Lincoln as he walks at midnight is only the desire of living hearts realized, the apparition for a moment in its bodily vesture of a spirit too precious ever to have become merely a memory. He lives as the father of every cult lives, in the echoes of his voice on many tongues and the vibrations of his presence in many hearts. For poetry such a cult offers an enormous future as yet only just suspected. Our poets have a folk-hero who to the common folk-virtues of shrewdness and kindness adds essential wit and eloquence and loftiness of soul. Perhaps the disposition just now to purge him of all rankness and to make him out a saint and mystic may not last for ever, but obviously it is a step in his poetical history analogous to those steps which ennobled Charlemagne and Arthur and canonized Joan of Arc.

Documents increase around the great and mysterious figure of Whitman, but they add little to his greatness and take away little from his mystery. The two volumes called *The Gathering of the Forces* contain after all only ephemeral material which Whitman wrote for the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* during his editorship in 1846–47 and which, though important because by him, would be less important if it were by any one else. And it might have been by almost any one else. Generally sensible, occasionally rather noble, now and then eloquent, often symptomatic of the prophet who was to come, these editorials and essays and book reviews are most of the time perfunctory and commonplace. Here Whitman loses himself in trivial political rows, echoes conventional opinions, scrambles up to a few peaks of originality with obvious effort. The demands of his occupation perhaps account for this; and yet at that very period he was beginning to undergo the spiritual upheaval which seems to have taken place in him during 1847–48 and out of which he emerged with his loins girded for the mighty race. Something of the nature of that upheaval appears in the manuscript notebooks lately published for the first time in *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt*

Whitman. What Whitman wrote for the *Daily Eagle* came, one may say, from the top of his head; in his notebooks he set down the record of dim perturbations which were then going on in his very spirit, his very tissue.

The moment when Whitman found his wings and dared them is the most interesting moment in his entire career. There the mystery of the poet centres. He who had once screamed with the spread-eagle now proposed to "sky-lark with God." His excursion to New Orleans and back in 1848 does not sufficiently explain his awakening, much as it stirred him to wonder at the body of his land; neither does the troubled love which may then have entered his life and have shaken him out of his established routines. Some change was taking place in him, some annunciation, which roused the man into the seer. What are the actual causes and processes of that change no one yet knows how to explain. It may be God, it may be glands; it is the deep, unseen behaviour of genius.

I am habitually at a loss to know why so few critics of Whitman have paid due attention to what he himself reveals in his poems concerning the crucial moments in his growth. Is it because he dramatizes those moments with such fierce intensity that the biography in them is neglected? He is unmistakably explicit in his account of the experience reported in the fifth section of the *Song of Myself,* of his experience with what he called his Soul:

"I mind how once we lay, such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers."

Yet this mystical experience, which has been often noted, is in no respect more illuminating than the poetical experience of which Whitman tells quite as explicitly in *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*. In that supreme song of separation he not only gives voice to bereavement in the guise of a bird's wailing for its lost mate by the seashore: he also records the sudden genesis of his consciousness that he was a poet, "the outsetting bard of love."

"Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,

And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,
louder, and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within
me, never to die."

Awakened to his function, however, and vowed to be the singer of death, Whitman had yet to find a mode of utterance. He would not find it among traditional modes because he was wedded to the conception of a new democratic aesthetic; he could not respond to current rhythms because he was too stoutly original. What happened he makes clear enough in *Proud Music of the Storm*. The poet lies in his "lonesome slumber-chamber" haunted by the rhythms of life:

"Blast that careers so free, whistling across the prairies,
Strong hum of forest tree-tops—wind of the mountains,
Personified dim shapes—you hidden orchestras,
You serenades of phantoms with instruments alert,
Blending with Nature's rhythmus, all the tongues of
nations."

Thither come to him the strophes of love, of martial enterprises, of folk-dances, of the hymns of religions, till he is so shaken that

"Give me to hold all sounds, (I madly struggling cry,)
Fill me with all the voices of the universe,
Endow me with their throbbings, Nature's also,
The tempests, waters, winds, operas and chants, marches
and dances,
Utter, pour in, for I would take them all.

Then I woke softly,
And pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream,
And questioning all those reminiscences, the tempest in its fury,
And all the songs of sopranos and tenors,
And those rapt oriental dances of religious fervour,
And the sweet varied instruments, and the diapason of organs,
And all the artless plaints of love and grief and death,
I said to my silent curious soul, out of the bed of the slumber-chamber,
Come, for I have found the clue I sought so long,
Let us go forth refresh'd amid the day,
Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real,
Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.

And I said, moreover,
Haply, what thou hast heard O soul was not the sound of winds,
Nor dream of raging storm, nor sea-hawk's flapping wings, nor harsh screams,
Nor vocalism of sun-bright Italy,
Nor German organ majestic, nor vast concourse of voices, nor layers of harmonies,
Nor strophes of husbands and wives, nor sound of marching soldiers,
Nor flutes, nor harps, nor the bugle-call of camps,
But, to a new rhythmus fitted for thee,
Poems bridging the way from Life to Death, vaguely wafted in the night air, uncaught, unwritten,
Which let us go forth in the bold day and write."

There was never a bolder conclusion to a poem in the world.

THE LION AND THE UNIFORM

In *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* Van Wyck Brooks studies the tragedy which he sees in the career of a genius who was born with the nature of a great artist but born into an environment so uncongenial to art that he had to struggle against it all his life, and vainly, except for a few radiant occasions when he escaped it rather by accident than by any natural sense of his best direction or any wisdom which he had been able to acquire. In "that dry, old, barren, horizonless Middle-West of ours," according to Mr. Brooks, where in Mark Twain's boyhood and youth the frontier had not yet lightened the hand of death which it always laid upon every uncomplacent urge toward art or creativeness or even distinction, Mark Twain had a smaller opportunity for free growth than he would have had on "the fertile human soil of any spot in Europe." Moreover, not only his general environment but the individual who touched him most intimately contrived, however unwittingly, to clip and bind his instinctive wings. His mother, keen, spry, witty, energetic, but hungry for the love she had missed in her marriage and therefore insatiate in her maternal passions, checked all the impulses in her sensitive son which looked to her like eccentricities and

tenderly hammered him into the only mould tolerated in Missouri—the mould of respectability and amiability. That he did not quite stay hammered is testimony to the strength of his desire, but it was never to become fully conscious. So, though his episode on the river as pilot partly liberated him, for there he had a craft and an authority which he never had anywhere else in his life, he was capable of relapsing again into the temper and texture of the herd when he drifted to the still wilder frontier of the Rockies and the Pacific Coast. There, where any affection for privacy seemed a contempt for society and any differentiation from the crowd seemed almost an insult to it, Mark Twain had no choice, if he was to express himself and still be respectable and amiable, but to express himself in the permitted idiom of the humourist. "Plainly, pioneer life had a sort of chemical effect on the creative mind, instantly giving it a humorous cast. Plainly, also, the humourist was a type that pioneer society required in order to maintain its psychical equilibrium." Laughter was the only ultimate weapon in the desperate battle with the wilderness. "Women laughed," as Albert Bigelow Paine phrases it, "that they might not weep; men when they could no longer swear."

That such laughter was heroic, Mr. Brooks, a humane critic, would admit, but he is too ardently, too fiercely, a partisan of the divine right of the creative impulse to feel that Mark Twain's submission to such laughter was less than deeply tragic. And when the

first harvests of fame released this Pacific humourist from his humorous prison, what had he to turn to? Nothing, Mr. Brooks answers, but the Gilded Age of our Reconstruction madness, when the entire nation, with a fearful homogeneity, was out money-hunting as it had never been before; when natural resources hitherto unsuspected were being tapped, and such sparse resources of the soul as had existed here and there under the régime of our ancient culture were being deserted, almost as obviously as were those stony farms which the most alive natives of New England were leaving to the shiftless men and hesitant, half-alive virgins who had to carry on the stock and the traditions.

Into this desiccating atmosphere Mark Twain came just when its best spiritual oxygen had all been pumped out. Too insecure in his own standards not to defer to those of the established East, he took the standards of the first persons under whose influence he fell. There was his wife, who had been brought up in Elmira, in "up-state" New York, where a "stagnant, fresh water aristocracy, one and seven-eighths or two and a quarter generations deep, densely provincial, resting on a basis of angular sectarianism, eviscerated politics, and raw money, ruled the roost, imposing upon all the rest of society its own type, forcing all to submit to it or to imitate it." Mark Twain submitted and imitated, with the result that he, who had in himself the makings of a *sans-culotte,* became in most outward ways a pillar of society, and he who was

built to be a Rabelais of loud, large, exuberant satire, became instead a writer quite safe (with a few furtively obscene exceptions, such as "1601") for the domestic fireside and the evening lamp. And not only his wife was to blame. There was William Dean Howells, whom Boston, lacking any such energetic blood of its own in those decaying days, had had to import from Ohio, but who without serious struggle accepted the spinsterly principles of Boston, decided that "the more smiling aspects of life are the more American," and, as regards Mark Twain, tamed him with the doctrines of a timid gentility and a surface realism. Once handcuffed between these two good and gentle captors, Mark Twain was lost. Instead of satirizing the United States as he was born to do, he satirized medieval France and England and generally the great, deep past of Europe, thereby actually multiplying the self-congratulations of which his countrymen had already too much the habit. Instead of telling the truth about contemporary life, which he had the eyes to see, he kept a thousand silences on matters about which he could not say what he saw and thought without hurting the feelings of his friends—that is, the privileged class. Instead of building some precious edifice of beauty that might dare the sun and shake the very spheres, as great beauty does, he was content to laugh at beauty or at least at those exceptional creatures who follow it into paths that to duller men seem vague or ridiculous. Poor Mark Twain, Mr. Brooks in effect concludes, he was born to be a master

and creator, but he died having never been anything but the victim of his epoch—the "saddest, most ironical figure," the playboy of the Western World.

No briefer summary could do justice to a book in many respects so novel as this and no bare outline of Mr. Brooks's argument could afford to be less uncompromising, for he himself is uncompromising in his general arraignment of the industrial civilization and the uncompleted culture which could hold Mark Twain down and of the qualities in his character which allowed him to be held. That it is an arraignment, however, and exhibits instances of special pleading and a definite animus must be admitted even by those who, like myself, agree that the picture here drawn of our greatest humourist is substantially accurate as well as brilliant. Let me cite some examples. Mark Twain once proposed a conundrum, "Why am I like the Pacific Ocean?" and himself answered it: "I don't know. I was just asking for information." "If he had not had a certain sense of colossal force," comments Mr. Brooks, "it would never have occurred to him, however humorously, to compare . . . his magnitude with that of the Pacific Ocean." It will not do to take the commentator here as seriously as he takes Mark Twain. Again, speaking of the instinct for protective coloration which led Mark Twain, with the other humourists, to adopt a pen-name, Mr. Brooks finds it an "interesting coincidence that 'Mark Twain,' in the pilot's vocabulary, implied 'safe water.'" Interesting indeed, but totally insignificant, though Mr.

Brooks by mentioning it makes it look like a tiny aspersion on Mark Twain's courage. And once more, this passage with regard to *Huckleberry Finn,* in which for once its author seems to Mr. Brooks to have slipped out of the silken net of which Mrs. Clemens held the drawstrings and the golden cage to which Mr. Howells held the key, and floated freely and gloriously down the Mississippi on a raft, essentially disguised as the joyful, illiterate, vagabond Huck. "That Mark Twain was almost if not quite conscious of his opportunity we can see from his introductory note to the book: 'Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.' He feels so secure of himself that he can actually challenge the censor to accuse him of having a motive!" With the aid of psychoanalysis one can find motives for any burst of mirth, but this explanation singularly recalls O. Henry's remark about a certain husband whose wife was trying to provoke him to beat her so they could have the fun and luxury of making up: "Many ideas were far from his mind, but the farthest was the idea of beating his wife."

One thing that makes me suspect at times the general drift of Mr. Brooks's argument is that a good many of the details of his psychoanalyzing look suspicious. Read in cold blood the account of the effect upon Mark Twain's subsequent life of his promises to his mother on the occasion of his father's death:

"Already," we are told, "he was 'broken down' by his father's death: remorse had 'laid a heavy hand on him.' But what was this remorse; what had he done for grief or shame? 'A hundred things in themselves trifling,' which had offended in reality not his father's heart, but his father's will, as a conventional citizen with a natural desire to raise up a family in his own likeness. Feeble, frantic, furtive little feelings—out of this moody child, the first wavering steps of the soul; that is what they have really been, these peccadilloes, the dawn of the artist. And the formidable promptings of love tell him that they are sin! He is broken down indeed: all those crystalline fragments of individuality, still so tiny and so fragile, are suddenly shattered; his nature, wrought upon by the tense heat of that hour, has become again like soft wax. And his mother stamps there, with awful ceremony, the composite image of her own meagre traditions. He is to go forth the Good Boy by *force majeure*, he is to become such a man as his father would have approved of, he is to retrieve his father's failure, to recover the lost gentility of his family that had once been proud, to realize that 'mirage of wealth' that had ever hung before his father's eyes. And to do so he is not to quarrel heedlessly with his bread and butter, he is to keep strictly within the code, to remember the maxims of Ben Franklin, to respect all the prejudices and all the conventions; above all, he is not to be drawn aside into any fanciful orbit of his own! . . . Hide your faces, Huck and Tom! Put away childish

things, Sam Clemens; go forth into the world, but remain always a child, your mother's child!" Are eleven-year-old boys, even boys of genius, really ever made over so sharply as this? Mr. Brooks says "we feel with irresistible certitude that Mark Twain's fate was once for all decided there." I wonder if this is not the "irresistible certitude" of those romancers and evangelists who believe in instantaneous and irrevocable conversions. Barbarous and dangerous a thing as it is for parents to exact promises from their children under the pressure of bitter events, still it is rarely as bad as all that.

The point is strained again when Mr. Brooks digs around the roots of Mark Twain's "obsession of animosity against the novels of Jane Austen" and traces it to an "indirect venting of his hatred of the primness and priggishness of his own *entourage*." More specifically, in his submerged self he hated his wife and Howells. "When Mark Twain utters such characteristic aphorisms as 'Heaven for climate, hell for society,' we see the repressed artist in him striking out at Mrs. Clemens and the Rev. Joseph Twitchell, whose companionship the dominant Mark Twain called, and with reason, for he seems to have been the most lovable of men, 'a companionship which to me stands first after Livy's [his wife's].' Similarly, when he roars and rages against the novels of Jane Austen we can see that buried self taking vengeance upon Mr. Howells, with whom Jane Austen was a prime passion, who had even taken Jane Austen as a model." Now, of course,

when the psychoanalytic hunt is on it seems unsubtle and unsympathetic to object, with common sense, that our antipathies are often accidental and that often enough we whimsically specialize in this or that antipathy, seeing how many angles we can hate it from, in how many slashing phrases we can utter a distaste which has grown into a habit that is positively a delight. But even if we do not lean too heavily on common sense and are merely rival psychoanalysts we must still admit that in Freud's house are many mansions and that every genius analyzed has so many roots each of them may look like the taproot, though only one can actually be.

Without for a moment denying Mr. Brooks the credit of being the first critic to dig importantly about the roots of an American man of genius, and indeed of making clear much that was not clear before, I still think he has reduced Mark Twain too neatly to the dualistic formula. For all this critic's learning and research and penetration, he does not quite give the effect of having been and seen entirely around the subject of his study. Just in proportion as Mark Twain was stupendously casual, as wasteful as nature in his processes, not always purposive at all but a rioter in whims and unprophesiable explosions, an amateur of the drifting life, Mr. Brooks appears to have missed him, because he misses there what he conceives to be "the mind of the mature artist, which is all of a single flood, all poise, all natural control." As in his earlier study of John Addington Symonds, Mr. Brooks

is rigorously monistic—almost monotheistic—in his conception of the creative life, so rigorously that he has come to see any sort of dualism in an artist's nature as not only the chief of tragedies but indeed as the chief of sins against his function and destiny. Ibsen felt that way about it and so did Milton on somewhat different grounds, but Molière and Shakespeare, if they had thought much about the matter, would pretty certainly have laid the emphasis much nearer the tragedy than the sin. And even whatever tragic aspect there might be would be somewhat relieved for them, I suspect, as *King Lear* by its poetry, by such an abundance of life as Mark Twain had and tasted. Is it merely being deceived by quantity to feel that Mr. Brooks, so avidly exigent as regards quality, limits too narrowly his judgments as regards the creative process and its achievements, and by despising quantity overlooks some quality too? At least I am persuaded that Mr. Brooks has taken the vast figure of Mark Twain, both fact and myth, and has recreated it too near his own image, making the Mark Twain of his re-creation suffer more both in his submerged and his dominant selves than the originally created Mark Twain did by reason of the turbulent confusion of his career. Mr. Brooks, sparer, more clear-cut, more conscious, would thus have suffered if *he* had walked such a fraying path.

If I take too many exceptions to this account of the "ordeal" of Mark Twain it is because I believe it to be a book worthy the most scrupulous consideration.

Side by side with the vulgar myth of Mark Twain I foresee that this interpretation of him will take its place for a long time to come, correcting the other, pleasing the judicious by its general truthfulness and its felicitous language, even invading the textbooks and becoming classic. I think it should do these things, but I hope it will also be perceived to be, something after the manner of, say, Voltaire's *Lettres Anglaises*, a clever tract, another resounding shot in the warfare which Mr. Brooks is waging on behalf of the leadership of letters. Herein he has set forth the career of a man of letters who should have been leader and was not, with implications on every vivid page as to why and how others may take warnings from his failure. "Has the American writer of today the same excuse for missing his vocation?" Mr. Brooks concludes. " 'He must be very dogmatic or unimaginative,' says John Eglinton, with a prophetic note that has ceased to be prophetic, 'who would affirm that man will never weary of the whole system of things which reigns at present. . . . We never know how near we are to the end of any phase of our experience, and often, when its seeming stability begins to pall upon us, it is a sign that things are about to take a new turn.' Read, writers of America, the driven, disenchanted, anxious faces of your sensitive countrymen; remember the splendid parts your confrères have played in the human drama of other times and other peoples, and ask yourself whether the hour has not come to put away childish things and walk the stage as poets do."

III. TWO NOTES ON YOUTH

THE RELEASE OF YOUTH

JOHN FISKE perceived that human history has been greatly affected by the fact that man has a longer infancy than the other animals. A creature which grows to its full stature and faculties in a few hours or weeks or months or even years has not the same opportunity to travel far in knowledge or to build its intelligence upon observations and conclusions as has the creature which normally matures through at least a score of years. There still remains to be studied the effect upon mankind of the deliberate prolongation of infancy which, particularly in Europe and America, has been going on for something over a century. Perhaps it should be called less a prolongation of infancy than a discovery that infancy actually lasts longer than had been realized. The social effect is much the same. In the eighteenth century the unproductive and acquisitive period of infancy for boys rarely lasted beyond twenty years, even for those who were trained at the colleges and universities. For the same class in the twentieth century—a class now proportionately larger than then—a period of twenty-five years is nearer the average. The shift is even more marked as regards girls, who a hundred years ago were likely to be married at seventeen or eighteen but who

now are quite likely to remain unmarried till twenty-five, and very many, of course, till later. What has become of those years of human life thus lost to adult society, or at least diverted to new purposes?

It will not do to answer that such years of youth have been offset by the years added at the end of life through the advance of hygiene and medicine. Even if the total number were the same—and there are no figures to prove or to disprove it—there would still be an incalculable difference in quality. Consider the matter in a simple biological aspect. The postponement of marriage has reduced the number of children born, and has therefore released for other functions a vast amount of human energy once devoted by very young women to gestation and lactation. Anyone who has had occasion to observe a group of girls in the schools and colleges of this generation knows how tremendous is the store of surplus energy for which there is no biological outlet and which too often fails to be sublimated as it might well be into other forms of service. The quantity of such energy which the war showed to be in reserve should not have been a surprise to the teachers or observers of youth. No more should it have been a surprise that those who were thought of as mere boys should have suddenly and successfully taken up heavier labours and larger responsibilities than they had known before. The energy had been all the time in existence, though it had been spent on study or sports or dissipation. Thousands and thousands of years had instructed the race to give

about so many years and about so much energy to youth, and the arbitrary customs of a century could not accomplish anything but the most superficial changes. The war, which wasted and worse than wasted human riches, almost certainly threw away a larger treasury of youth than any previous generation could have done, for the reason that there was more youth to throw away.

Surely the splendour of modern life, its variety and glitter and colour and movement, capable even of blinding men now and then to the drabness of its machine-processes, must have been due in part to the prolongation of infancy. There have been longer hours for play and more ways of playing: new games, new dances, new contests of speed and strength and dexterity, and in America especially an increasing return to the mimic wild life of the summer camp. What, among other things, peace must be made to give back is that abundance of youth. We need no increase of the birth-rate to absorb the energy of the girls; we need no new wars to waste the energy of the boys. We need instead to recognize this precious asset and to employ it. The first step should be to distribute the fulness of life among more boys and girls than had it before the war, when it belonged to a too narrow privileged class. The next should be to civilize it, not by cramping and restraining its activities but by associating them with thought and passion and beauty. In how many quarters of the world have athletics, the natural expression of the release of youth, been viewed

as sheer rowdyism or at best as squandered power! But, viewed more largely, athletics must appear the physical symbol of the energy which the race has latterly been hoarding. Not athletics merely but the thing thereby symbolized must be drawn into the general current of existence. It means the enlargement of youth's pleasure, the evocation of its deeper thought and passion, the development of its capacities. And of course whatever enriches youth in time enriches all society.

YOUTH IS ALWAYS RIGHT

The keenest intelligence in the British Isles has recently uttered what is perhaps its keenest observation. The intelligence is, of course, Bernard Shaw's. The observation is that if a great teacher of his age has done all he ought to do he must expect, and he should desire, to come in time to seem outmoded, superfluous, even something of a nuisance. Thinking, Mr. Shaw perceives, is in this respect like walking: once the habit has been acquired the learner has to practise it alone. As he cannot be precisely the same person his teacher was, he must go by different paths to different goals. Indeed, the measure of the valuable teacher of thinking is his power to show his pupils how they may reach conclusions he himself never could reach. After Socrates, Plato; after Plato, Aristotle. It calls, indeed, for an almost inhuman degree of magnanimity to rejoice when we see ourselves distanced by those whom we first set upon their feet; Mr. Shaw's attitude of willingness, even of eagerness, is a sign of that capacity for elevated vision which has lent wings to his words and barbs to his truth. But his prompt admission of a thing which his mind lets him see is only what he has taught his followers, and his age, to expect of him. No matter if it does not flatter his pride. He does

not have the kind of pride by the exercise of which a man would rather be president than be right. He knows that the life of thought depends not upon the fidelity with which it continues in one direction but upon the vitality with which it stirs successive generations.

For thinking is part of the human process no less than play or work or love or aspiration. Its roots are in the protoplasm and its nourishment comes from living growth. To look back over the long and jagged history of opinion is to discover that opinions rise and fall but that only the making and testing of opinion go on for ever; and it is to discover that opinion has always prospered most when it was most nearly allied with the creative forces of youth. Perhaps one should hardly call it opinion at all when those who cherish it are following it in full pursuit. Perhaps then it is instinct and little more. But the instincts of youth are precious as nothing else is precious. Youth, viewed broadly, is always right.

Viewed thus broadly, conservatism is the element of death and radicalism is the element of life. The human tribe, straggling through the wilderness of the world, perpetuates itself by begetting and bearing its young, who, at first protected by bosom and counsel, eventually detach themselves and move toward the front while their parents gradually slip toward the rear and are left behind. The process is cruel but it is real; and it is irresistible. What other course, after all, is there to take? Who knows where we come

from or where we are going to? If youth has now and then plunged blindly along blind roads, so has age wrought incalculable evil by inquisitions and oppressions aimed to check the march of mankind in its natural advance. Experience grows cynical and lags heavily back, scorning the impulse to create. Youth staggers under the burden of freeing itself, as if it were not enough to perform the hard tasks and fight the bitter battles which the old men of the tribe "wish" upon it. No wonder high hearts falter under their fate when they do not rebel; no wonder they grow old so soon and take up the immemorial complaint; no wonder the youth of any particular generation always does so little. It is right but it is in the minority.

Fortunately years alone are not the final evidence of youth or age. Always there are wise men who, like Socrates or Goethe in their days, or like Bernard Shaw or Anatole France in ours, refuse to grow old as the seasons increase upon them. They put forth new leaves, they unfold new blossoms, with a continuous rejuvenescence. They are the links between young and old. Through their intercession youth grows conscious of the meaning of its urges, as it is already conscious of its essential rightness. Through their interpretation age is reminded of what, left alone, it would always forget: the generous intentions and the authentic power of youth. They are the true spiritual parents of the race. Yet what they do is no more than what all parents do who are not jealous of their children. They watch them at their wild games with

joy that they are so strong. They offer advice which, they hope, may save them the experience of unnecessary pain and may help them to realize their potentialities, but they do not feel too much chagrin when the advice is slighted, knowing that wisdom is incommunicable and must be learned over again in person by each new apprentice to life. Alas that there are so few good or wise parents! It is the fault of the bad and the unwise if they find youth wilful, heedless, insolent. They have fixed their eyes upon individuals who go astray and not upon the larger drift in which life is perpetually renewed. Is life itself good or bad? There are, it is true, divergent answers to the question, but few are better than that of E. W. Howe, who says: "We have it, and must make the best of it. And as long as we do not blow our brains out, we have decided life is worth living." At least life is best where it is most vivid—in the heart and ways of youth.

IV. HOWELLS: MAY 1920

EULOGIUM

MARK TWAIN and Henry James could have agreed on few subjects, but William Dean Howells was one of them. To such antipodean geniuses he stood as equally great writer and great friend. "For forty years," said Mark Twain in a familiar passage, "his English has been to me a continual delight and astonishment. In the sustained exhibition of certain great qualities—clearness, compression, verbal exactness, and unforced and seemingly unconscious felicity of phrasing—he is, in my belief, without his peer in the English-writing world. *Sustained.* I entrench myself behind that protecting word. There are others who exhibit those great qualities as greatly as he does, but only by intervaled distributions of rich moonlight, with stretches of veiled and dimmer landscape between; whereas Howells's moon sails cloudless skies all night and all the nights." Henry James never ceased to exclaim at the abundance no less than the discipline of Howells's "great garden, . . . the tract of virgin soil that, beginning as a cluster of bright, fresh, sunny and savoury patches, close about the house, as it were, was to become that vast goodly pleasaunce of art and observation, of appreciation and creation, in which you have laboured, with-

out a break or a lapse, to this day. . . . They make a great array, a literature in themselves, your studies of American life, so acute, so direct, so disinterested, so preoccupied but with the fine truth of the case. . . . The *real* affair of the American case and character, as it met your view and brushed your sensibility, that was what inspired and attached you, and, heedless of foolish flurries from other quarters, of all wild or weak slashings of the air and wavings in the void, you gave yourself to it with an incorruptible faith. You saw your field with a rare lucidity; you saw all it had to give in the way of the romance of the real and the interest and the charm of the common, as one may put it; the character and the comedy, the point, the pathos, the tragedy, the particular home-grown humanity under your eyes and your hand and with which all the life about you was closely interknitted. Your hand reached out to these things with a fondness that was in itself a literary gift, and played with them as the artist only and always can play: freely, quaintly, incalculably, with all the assurance of his fancy and his irony, and yet with that fine taste for the truth and the pity and the meaning of the matter which keeps the temper of observation both sharp and sweet. . . . Stroke by stroke and book by book your work was to become, for this exquisite notation of our whole democratic light and shade and give and take, in the highest degree *documentary;* so that none other, through all your fine long season, could approach it in value and amplitude. None, let me say, too, was to ap-

proach it in essential distinction; for you had grown master, by insidious practices best known to yourself, of a method so easy and so natural, so marked with the personal element of your humour and the play, not less personal, of your sympathy, that the critic kept coming on its secret connection with the grace of letters much as Fenimore Cooper's Leather-Stocking—so knowing to be able to do it!—comes, in the forest, on the subtle tracks of Indian braves."

How great a friend Howells was to Mark Twain and Henry James—the three of them so much the most important American men of letters in their generation—comes vividly to light in the brilliant correspondence already made public by Albert Bigelow Paine and Percy Lubbock. James admits with a tender eagerness that the editorial hand which Howells held out to him from the *Atlantic* in the summer of 1868 "was really the making of me, the making of the confidence that required help and sympathy and that I should otherwise, I think, have strayed and stumbled about a long time without acquiring." Mark Twain owed Howells a larger, more intimate debt than mere encouragement at the outset: nothing did more to civilize the magnificent barbarian who wrote *The Innocents Abroad* to a point at which he was capable of writing *Huckleberry Finn* than the friendly counsel and judicious approbation of Howells, who drew him by the "insidious practices" of a perpetually good example from journalism to literature. He who with one hand was encouraging the sensitive young dilettante, with

the other was restraining the tumultuous humourist—and at the same time managing with so great devotion and dexterity his own richly unfolding career. Neither Mark Twain nor Henry James could have done it for the other two; the surest and strongest of the three was not either of those who have most usually been called the geniuses but that one who for his quietness has been so much too much unheard.

The quietness with which Howells lived, though as an author he was so busy, has kept not only the general public but the more or less literary public from realizing the part he played in the literary life of his time. His relations to Henry James and Mark Twain but epitomize his relations to many others of fainter reputation. In Hamlin Garland's *Son of the Middle Border* there is a significant chapter which tells how a passionate young pilgrim from a prairie farm approached the "most vital literary man in all America at this time"—the middle eighties, when "reading Boston was divided into two parts—those who liked Howells and those who fought him." And in Brand Whitlock's *Forty Years of It*—among the most moving of American books—appear constant references, in the midst of a world of warfare for justice and decency, to another young writer's charmed intervals of passion for a master, particularly an account of certain "long summer afternoons in company with William Dean Howells, whom, indeed, in my vast admiration, and I might say, my reverence, for him, I had gone there [to New England from Ohio] to see. He had intro-

duced me to Mark Twain, and I had come away with feelings that were no less in intensity, I am sure, than those with which Moses came down out of Mount Horeb." In a dozen memoirs, if one wanted to quote them all, there are already such testimonies; and more dozens will be written wherein testimony will be borne to the effect that Howells more completely than almost any other American led and fought for and exemplified and accomplished a notable literary movement. The very extent to which he succeeded in his persuasive battles for realism in fiction has somewhat obscured his deeds. No one now goes—or needs to go—over the arguments for simple truthfulness which Howells had to make in the eighties. Even his classical little treatise "Criticism and Fiction"—let alone the body of book reviews and slighter essays of his minor skirmishes—seems doctrine too unquestioned to call for argument. Of course, its vitality has gone out of it only in the sense that the vitality has gone out of any seed from which a plant has grown up. The energy has passed into the flower and the fruit. Just how large was this expended energy it is still too soon to estimate; but any serious study in the intellectual and spiritual history of America discovers more and more lines converging to the controversies of the decade from 1880 to 1890 when Howells's was the most eloquent voice. Even the theatre—that native home of the tinsel which Howells hated—had for a time its James A. Herne trying "to write plays which should be as true in their local colour as Howells's stories."

To speak of the battle for realism in fiction as a cause won can mean, of course, nothing more than that the cause as Howells led it was won for the moment. Against his sort of civilized and decent reality the tide is always rising. In the nineties there were reactions on two sides from the more or less official realism of Howells and his immediate followers: one the flamboyant and rococo historical romance of the school which first begot "best sellers," and the other the sterner, angrier naturalism of younger men who were no longer suited by the gentleness with which Howells exposed the truth. It was no secret from his friends that in his later days he felt lonely and outlived. Everywhere criticism applauded him, but his books were less frequently bought and read than they had been. Into the causes of that decline it would need a volume to go deeply: the whole movement of the world is involved, the movement away from an urbane liberalism with its balance and calm and delicate irony to a more insistent clash between extremes of temper which war on one another with an animus surpassed only by that with which they hew down the peace-makers of the middle ground. For twenty years Howells has been under judgment from such partisans, and it is no wonder that the hand of time has been hurried in the task of discriminating between those achievements of his which shall survive and those others which are to enter into their mortality. Naturally, his uncollected trifles will go first, though that universe must be rich which can afford to throw away

his various occasional comments on books and men, especially those essays from the Editor's Study and the Editor's Easy Chair in which he more than any one else made Americans familiar with the great Latin realists and the greater realists of Russia. Next, without much question, it will be his farces which find their proper niche in oblivion, though here, too, the sacrifice of spirit and mirth is greater than any but a few cheerful antiquarians will ever know. His more formal criticism will go then, having done its work and taken its honest wages. Nor have his many books of travel a good chance long to outlast his criticism, fresh and sunny as some thousands of their pages are, unless perhaps his early Italian volumes have the luck of James Howell's letters, to be kept alive by the pungency in their observations and the poetry in their wit. A few of Howells's verses may very well find enduring corners in the anthologies—a form of immortality not really to be sniffed at.

There remain two departments of his work which in the light of such a scrutiny draw very close together: his memoirs and his novels. Perhaps the travel books ought to be mentioned here again. Indeed, Howells himself many years ago explained that in his first novel, *Their Wedding Journey,* he started out "to mingle fiction and travel—fiction got the best of it." On the whole, however, his travels suffer from comparison with his memoirs and novels by reason of the very quality which makes most novels inferior to his—inferior in the actual amount of human life pres-

ent. Howells would have been one of the first to argue that a traveller sees too many formal displays to see much reality; sees too many types to see many men and women; sees too many facts to see much truth. Life, he steadily maintained, can never be judged nor can it be veraciously represented by its picturesque aspects. On this point Howells deserves to be called perhaps the most truly democratic of all novelists. Fenimore Cooper and Hawthorne in their day, and Henry James in his, could never leave off complaining that a democracy lacks the elements of saliency and colour upon which the novelist must base his prosperity. No, said Howells to all such complaints. Whatever in life tends to raise individuals arbitrarily above the average in wealth or station tends to make them formal and typical, and so no longer truly individual—and so no longer true. What essentially characterizes and distinguishes men from one another and so varies the pattern of life and fiction is the minutiae of daily differences—and they are the true concern of the novelist. No wonder then that Howells's memoirs are so close to his novels in tone and substance. It was with the same method that he set forth the people whom he had known in the flesh and those he had known only in the larger world of his imagination. His pen moved quite naturally from Lowell to Silas Lapham, and it would be difficult to say which is richer in verisimilitude, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* or *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*. The first is more intimate, because, as the characters were

all Howells's own, he could do with their secrets as he liked; the second is more spacious, because it deals with a group of men who led lives of spacious learning and reflection; but the truth is in both of them. Memoirs and novels must consequently be taken together to make up that documentary revelation which Henry James admired.

Where else, indeed, may be found another representation of American life during half a century as extended and accurate as that in Howells's total work? Geographically, indeed, he was limited, in the main, to Ohio, New England, and New York, and to those parts of Europe in which Ohioans, New Englanders, and New Yorkers spend their vacations. He belonged, too, to the older America, the America in which the country still could lie down with the towns and the villages could lead them; the thunder and smoke of the larger industrial America appear in his later work and are reported with exquisite sympathy, but they appear less as realities in themselves than as problems pressing into the lives of the older order of citizens. Howells shut his eyes—at least in his fiction—somewhat singularly also to the brutal, sordid, illicit aspects of his country, not intending to deny them, as Puritans or pedants do, but preferring to move discreetly among them, choosing his subjects "as a sage chooses his conversation, decently." All these are limitations, but they accuse Howells of nothing worse than too much gentleness. They ask him to stand a little further off from Ibsen and a little nearer Irving;

nearer Thackeray than Carlyle; nearer Flaubert than Balzac. And yet by his wealth of observation he belongs with the most luxuriant geniuses, with Scott and Dickens and George Sand. Nor does it contradict the claim that he was so luxuriant to say that doubtless a few of his novels will easily survive the rest—*A Modern Instance, The Rise of Silas Lapham, Indian Summer, A Hazard of New Fortunes, The Kentons,* and that exquisite triumph of art and temper, *A Chance Acquaintance.* (Of this last Howells himself said that it made him more friends than any of the others; he thought *A Modern Instance* the strongest, and he liked *Indian Summer* best.) Outside of this charmed, preferred circle there are dozens of other novels which exhibit dozens and hundreds of corners of the American world with sharp eyes and sunny wisdom and golden humour and delicate art.

That art could make men as different as Mark Twain and Henry James—again—unenviously despair. "I should think," the first of them wrote Howells, on reading *A Foregone Conclusion,* "that this must be the daintiest, truest, most admirable workmanship that was ever put on a story. The creatures of God do not act out their natures more unerringly than yours do." And nearly thirty years later Henry James wrote concerning *The Kentons:* "Delightful, in one's golden afternoon, and after many days and many parturitions, to put forth thus a young, strong, living flower. You have done nothing more true and complete, more thoroughly homogeneous and hanging together, without the

faintest ghost of a false note or a weak touch." To all appearances the art of Howells was one of the easiest for the artist with which a story-teller was ever endowed. Never any signs of awkwardness, or of straining with his material, or of plotting against his action how he shall make it come out at some better point than it seems to wish! From the very first Howells can have had little to learn. He said that the master of his first manner was Turgenev, whose look of artlessness seemed to Howells the perfection of technique; but that after he became acquainted with Tolstoi he could no longer feel satisfied with any sacrifice, however subtle, and so transferred his allegiance to the manner of Tolstoi, which not only seemed but actually was without art. This confession cannot be taken too seriously. When the change came Howells had already written *A Modern Instance* and *The Rise of Silas Lapham;* and the narratives that follow show no increase in ease and naturalness. Nor, of course, did Howells speak literally in his claim that Tolstoi exhibits no art. All that the episode can mean—and Howells's account of it—is that he had the native knack of story-telling, and that once started his narratives flowed from him with an orderliness and lucidity and progress toward a destination which thoroughly matched his prose.

Now this order and clarity were Howells himself, and with the friendly charm of his personality they make beautiful the little body of memoirs for which he is unsurpassed in the literature of his country.

American boyhood has nowhere been more goldenly recalled than in *A Boy's Town*. Nowhere may there be encountered more lovely records of a dreaming and yet ambitious adolescence than in *Years of My Youth*. *My Literary Passions* contrives to make the mere account of Howells's reading seem more exciting than the adventures of most men and more beguiling than many intrigues considerably less innocent. *My Mark Twain* is the most exquisite tribute yet paid by one American man of letters to another. And *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*, best of all pictures of the classic days of Cambridge and Boston when Howells was editor of the *Atlantic*, is no less classical than the original productions which the period put forth. But superlatives, though true, are terribly unavailing. And how do justice to the subtlety of his senses, the tenderness of his affections, the range and hospitality of his sympathies, the strength yet generosity of his ambition, the firmness of his will, the temperateness of his behaviour, his resolute fair-mindedness, his unprejudiced reverences, his undivagating shrewdness, and his great treasures of good humour? Occasionally there do occur men who disarm all censure—at least for a time—and in the midst of a censorious world it is pleasant now and then to let down the visor and throw by the spear and shield. Such a man Raphael was; and in a different way and world such a man Howells has been.

V. NOOKS AND FRINGES

ON HATING THE PROVINCES

EMERSON lived in Concord and took villages for granted, as natural microcosms in any one of which a sage might study the world. Whitman lived in Manhattan and sent his imagination on strong flights over the entire body of his land, and to the remotest regions, neither denying nor rejecting whatever signs of life he saw. Lincoln in Springfield, whitherto by no means all the philosophies had come and little enough of culture in any composition, mastered not only an incomparable wisdom but an incomparable style. To no one of these men could it have been quite understandable that a second or third generation after them would begin to display among certain of its intellectual leaders that restless and intense hatred of the provinces which marks, for example, the critics of Paris and the professors of Berlin. Yet something of precisely this sort has come to pass. Voice after voice is added to the regiments of criticism being raised against suburban Philistia and the villatic bourgeoisie.

That is to say, a reaction is commencing against the frontier which has had so large a hand in making us. It is no longer a natural device to put critical sagacity in the mouth of a rural sage. When Lowell created

Hosea Biglow he did so with the brash originality of a young man who was taking venturesome shots at his age; no young American of Lowell's scholarship would think a second time of such a device today. Josh Billings and Artemus Ward to all but a few have come to seem "old stuff." Even Mr. Dooley is not a crossroads loafer but a native son of the city streets. In return for a long course of ridicule from rustic philosophers a new order of *philosophes* is striking back. We need not wonder, perhaps, that the riposte is often acrimonious; the weight of all this village ridicule has often been heavy. We need not feel too much distressed at the look of snobbishness which some of the critics of our frontier somewhat too continually wear; nothing ought to be so easy to forgive as a zeal for enlightenment. It is important to remember, however, that there is a point of vantage a little above this particular critical melee from which the battle appears less crucial than it doubtless appears to those who wage it.

That point of vantage is the artist's, at least so far as the artist is concerned with the reproduction of life without the Puritan's anxiety to make it—or to make it out—the kind of life he thinks it ought to be. The moralist condemns the "bad" people and the wit condemns the dull; but these are phases of argument. With argument the dramatist or novelist is much less concerned. His task is first of all a representation of what he finds, and his obligation ends—though he may decide to do more—when he has represented it. At

his lowest level he yields himself wholly to the manners of his society and sets them forth with implied approbation, as if they were the laws of God. At a higher level, he turns violently against its prejudices and assails them as if they were the sins of Satan. But there is a level higher still, from which, as he looks upon his community, he sees it as men and women involved in the exercises of life, and he makes his record of them without either uncritical admiration or vexed recrimination. Those novelists and dramatists who now hate our provinces most are nearly all dissatisfied men lately escaped from stodginess and devoted to getting their revenges. In this fashion the heretic, while his wounds smart, lashes back at the doctrines which oppressed him. But the truly emancipated spirit no longer has time for recrimination or revenge. He goes, as artist, about his proper business, accepting stupidity as his material as well as intelligence, vice as well as virtue, gentleness as well as cruelty. In every community, he knows, all the types and tendencies of humanity may be found, and it does not occur to him to be partisan of one neighbourhood —town or country—against another. He knows, too, that familiarity with mankind comes partly from affection for it, and that the truth is therefore not unrelated to affection. How then shall he tell the truth about the provinces so long as he feels nothing but animosity for them? It was not in this temper that Fielding drew Squire Western, or Scott his Caleb Balderstone, or Balzac poor stupid Père Goriot. After

long years in which this temper has sweetened and softened American fiction too much, we do indeed need more iron in it. But likewise it is well to remember that hatred rarely speaks the last word.

The later Elizabethans and the Jacobeans thought of the realm of Britain as comprising England, Scotland, Ireland, and Virginia—the fourth of these provinces being a more or less natural outlet for the energy of men who, cramped at home, had to seek gold or glory or adventure in wider regions. As the century advanced there grew up in the parent islands a party who felt no less cramped by theology than by geography, and they turned their imaginations to New England, where, it seemed, the faith might grow in the way they wanted. Certain of the proletarian members of this group went to Plymouth and a more prosperous body shortly afterwards to Boston, but neither they nor the sympathizers left behind understood that the saints had been really sundered by the emigration. Not for a century and more did the inhabitants of Boston and thereabouts, in Massachusetts, cease to look towards London as their cultural capital much as they had looked towards it while they lived in and near Boston in Lincolnshire; they were further removed, and that was all. The tongue that Shakespeare spoke, the faith and morals Milton held . . .

The Puritans in New England, indeed, knew or cared little enough about Shakespeare. The late

Thomas Goddard Wright's scrupulous researches have unearthed no signs that Shakespeare's works reached the Puritan colonies before 1722, when the reprobated James Franklin announced that he had them at the office of the *New England Courant* for any writer who might want to use them; or before 1723, when Harvard, also under fire for its lack of orthodoxy, listed them in its library catalogue. Nor was even Milton greatly valued for his poetry, though four copies of *Paradise Lost* are known to have been shipped to Boston in 1683; though Cotton Mather clearly knew the epic; though Yale received a gift, among other books, of all Milton's poetical works in 1714; and though Harvard in 1721-22 acquired "a new & fair Edicon" in two volumes (probably Tonson's noble quartos of 1720). Mather once or twice quotes Chaucer, whose writings were in both the Yale and Harvard libraries by 1723; Anne Bradstreet makes a solitary—and conventional—reference to "Spencer's poetry"; her father, Gov. Thomas Dudley, curiously enough, possessed the "Vision of Pierc Plowman." But on the whole there was scanty demand in New England for imaginative literature of any kind.

It is the contention of Mr. Wright, persuasively sustained, that while New England was no great country for poets it was a good country for scholars, and that it does not suffer by comparison with provincial Britain as regards its literary culture. The press at Cambridge was set up before the first one at Glasgow, or Rochester, or Exeter, or Manchester, or Liverpool.

The ministers and magistrates of the colonies brought books with them, and regularly received more. Theologians and theological treatises flowed back and forth across the Atlantic in a consistent stream. "*Old* England," says the *Magnalia* with pride, in 1702, after the founding of Harvard "had more ministers from *New*, than our New England had since *then* from Old." The younger John Winthrop was one of the early fellows of the Royal Society, and but for the Restoration might possibly have drawn Robert Boyle and others like him to Connecticut to establish there a "Society for Promoting Natural Knowledge"; Jonathan Brewster of that colony was by 1656 already a practising alchemist who felt sure he could perfect his elixir in five years. Even scholarship, however, tended to fall into a lower status as the first generation passed; in 1700 Harvard had certainly a smaller prestige abroad than it had had in 1650. The distance from London and the English universities was beginning to have its effect, precisely as would have happened had any of the English counties suddenly been cut off from them by a thousand leagues of dangerous ocean. Irrepressible scholars like Cotton Mather kept up the European tradition, but learning can hardly have been so generally diffused as it was during the first half century.

The creative instincts underwent a similar decline. John Cotton and his contemporaries were as eminent in theology as the Puritan ministers in England, and the funeral elegies which were their sole contributions

to belles-lettres can stand unashamed side by side with similar English performances. But as the Restoration succeeded the Commonwealth, and in turn was succeeded by "Anna's reign," New England neither evolved a literary class to follow, at a distance, the modes of the capital nor produced, as the English provinces were doing, an occasional wit who could leave home and make his literary fortunes in London. For that there was needed a stronger secular taste than New England had. Literature settled down to sermons. Instead of Marlowe's tragedy, people read the prose *History of the damnable Life and deserved Death of Dr. John Faustus;* the earliest play printed in New England seems to have been Lillo's edifying *George Barnwell,* issued by James Franklin in the *Weekly Journal* in 1732. And yet the importers' lists which Mr. Wright has unearthed make it clear that for a long time such plays and romances as Sidney's *Arcadia,* Head's *English Rogue, Pilgrim's Progress, Guy of Warwick,* and *Reynard the Fox* had been coming over in considerable numbers. John Dunton—an unreliable fellow, it is true—tells that during his stay in Boston in 1686 he had a customer who bought such books, "which to set off the better, she wou'd ask for Books of *Gallantry.*" In 1713 Cotton Mather was so much annoyed by the "foolish Songs and Ballads, which the Hawkers and Pedlars carry into all parts of the Countrey," that he wanted, "by way of Antidote," to issue "poetical Composures full of Piety"—including some of the "excellent *Watts's* Hymns." And

shortly thereafter the influence of the English wits had become so strong that Benjamin Franklin is seen to begin his literary career with imitations of the *Spectator* and that Mather Byles,

> Harvard's honor, and New England's hope,
> Bids fair to rise and sing and rival Pope,

as a poetical friend neatly put it at the time.

THE KIND MOTHER OF US ALL

I imagine that those of our ancestors who first struggled up from the aboriginal slime used to sit occasionally in moody caucuses and talk of the good old days and perhaps envy the slower creatures which still drew their breath—such as that breath was—in the simple freedom of the mud. I know that at this very moment there are excursion steamers plying, as a certain wit says, from the foot of Main Street to the Blessed Islands of the Pacific, where the air never dreams of biting, where love lies for ever in the green shade, and where the noble savage runs wild and beautiful and good—but not too good—on the lovely land or gives himself ecstatically to the tumbling surf. And I have just been reading of a time in the eighteenth century—most amusing of centuries—when curiosity and sentiment and a kind of cosmic libido among Englishmen focussed themselves upon the State of Nature and found what they were looking for, first abroad in many quarters of the earth and then at home, where proper English explorations end.

Little Britain, as Chauncey B. Tinker shows in a solid and jolly monograph called "Nature's Simple Plan," was waking up. During the sixties of the century Commodore Byron had come back with yarns

about the giant Patagonians; Wallis had seen Tahiti and named it after the idyllic George III; Cartwright, having lived for years in Labrador, had brought live Eskimos to London; Bruce had studied deepest Abyssinia, and Captain Cook had begun to plough the most distant seas with many a home-keeping eye upon him. Not only did the poets hymn the delights of new paradises, but the more or less sober men of science took up the ardent chorus. Lord Monboddo claimed that the Golden Age still lingered in the South Seas and tickled all the wags with his talk about men with tails and about the cousinship of men and monkeys. Luxury was under fire: Dr. Johnson defended it, but Goldsmith wept to see it devastating villages and consequently to

see the rural virtues leave the land.

Rousseau, orator and laureate of the primitive, called the attention of mankind to Corsica, where liberty still survived and where it might be possible for some wise man to teach the people how to preserve it. He himself began a constitution for the island, though he never finished it. Half Europe looked on encouragingly—but idly—while Pasquale Paoli led his Corsican revolt against Genoa. Boswell, visiting Rousseau while the philosopher was about his constitutional task, formed such a passion for the hardy island that he ventured into it, talked with Paoli, carried back to England a Corsican costume, and now and then conspicuously wore it while he tried to arouse the interest

of Englishmen at large in the heroic little revolution. When Genoa gave Corsica to France and England let France keep it the lovers of liberty had a dreadful shock.

They need not have been quite so shocked if they had viewed the matter more in its political and less in its literary aspect. But most of the partisans of Corsica were men, or amateurs, of letters, and they believed its defeat meant the loss to the world of that outburst of song which they had made up their minds they would hear as soon as Corsica should be free. Without liberty, they thought, there would be no lyres. At the very moment when countless peasants of England, unable or unwilling to endure the hard conditions of life in that tight realm, were taking themselves off in droves to the colonies, the poets of the country, partly stifled by a smug atmosphere and a tame tradition, sent their imaginations voyaging into lands and ages more hospitable to their profession. In *The Progress of Poetry* Gray talked about the behaviour of the Muse in Lapland and Chile; in *The Bard* he set forth the figure of an ancient minstrel whose rage lifts him to the point of prophecy. And whereas Gray had created a primitive singer, James Macpherson created a primitive song and filled the world with the wails of Ossian. The dream of a State of Nature had borne at least that much fruit.

But there was more to come. Romance had sown its seeds broadcast and the mood of the race kept on writhing in parturition. Gray had brooded over the

mute Miltons of Stoke Poges churchyard; the generation which saw his poem did what it could to see that no such persons should be mute. With the somewhat famous Stephen Duck the Poetical Thresher must stand, Professor Tinker points out, Mary Collier the Poetical Washerwoman and Henry Jones the Poetical Bricklayer and James Woodhouse the Poetical Shoemaker and Ann Yearsley the Poetical Milkwoman—all of them being wonders whom the fashionable exploited to this or that extent. Poetically, it happened, they were unanimously fizzles; and yet they paved a kind of way for a later peasant who was a genius. The discoverers of Robert Burns the Poetical Ploughman must at first have thought that here was merely another Duck. When they had caught him, indeed, they did not know what to do with him, and it is a question whether they helped or hurt him. He did not come, somehow, in the garb and gesture they had expected. Where were the high strains of the primitive bard? Where were the abstract declamations about liberty? Where the novel "numbers" in which he might be expected to dress his "natural" thought? Where the noble suavity? Where, I am afraid they asked in some chagrin, was the meek gratitude that even an inspired peasant should feel towards those who had unearthed him? So far as they could see, this was a man very much like other men.

Well, give them credit for what they did, whatever it was. They had been hunting for a simple, holy plan of nature, and they had looked for it in the

wrong places. They had looked into dim pasts and into distant islands about which they knew too little to be able to distinguish between nature and art. In their ignorance they had taken to pleasant guesses, to pretty sentiments, to poetical inventions. At least, however, they had longed for something simpler than the muddled universe they lived in; and at last they must some of them have understood that there is no State of Nature and there never has been and there never will be. Among the turbulence of things the mind, each mind, must discover and conquer its own simple plan.

Professor Tinker's book, besides being a pungent footnote to human history, is allegory. Its hero, which was a generation, set out to find simplicity. It travelled into very far countries and was disappointed, but in the end it turned back and learned that simplicity begins at home.

MOCHA DICK

Moby Dick, the hugest character in American fiction, had his original in a whale which Melville's biographer does not even mention but which must have been known to Moby Dick's. The name of the creature, according to the principal authority, was Mocha Dick, and he was first seen and attacked near the island of Mocha about 1810. For years he resisted capture. "Numerous boats are known to have been shattered by his immense flukes," wrote J. N. Reynolds a dozen years before *Moby Dick* was published, "or ground to pieces in the crash of his powerful jaws; and on one occasion it is said that he came off victorious from a conflict with the crews of three English whalers, striking fiercely at the last of the retreating boats at the moment it was rising from the water in its hoist up to the ship's davits. . . . From the period of Dick's first appearance his celebrity continued to increase, until his name seemed naturally to mingle with the salutations which whalemen were in the habit of exchanging in their encounters upon the broad Pacific, the customary interrogatories almost always closing with 'Any news from Mocha Dick?' "

No wonder that "nearly every whaling captain who rounded Cape Horn, if he possessed any professional ambition, or valued himself on his skill in subduing the

monarch of the seas, would lay his vessel along the coast, in the hope of having an opportunity to try the muscle of this doughty champion, who was never known to shun opponents." No wonder, either, that his fame went so far. "From the effect of age, or more probably from a freak of nature, . . . he was white as wool. Instead of projecting his spout obliquely forward, and puffing with a short, convulsive effort, as usual with his species, he flung the water from his nose in a lofty, perpendicular, expanded volume, at regular and somewhat distant intervals; its expulsion producing a continuous roar, like that of vapour struggling from the safety-valve of a powerful steam engine. Viewed from a distance, the practised eye of the sailor only could decide that the moving mass which constituted this enormous animal was not a white cloud sailing along the horizon."

In time Mocha Dick's back came to be serried with irons which had pierced his mighty hide and his wake was tangled with yards of line which he had broken in his rush or which had been cut off by desperate whalers to keep their boats from being dragged under water. Caution, too, entered that head with the barnacles clustered hard and tight upon it; he learned to present his back to the harpooner and to guard his "small" and the softer area under his fins. But with so many allies against him he finally met his fate. Attacked in his last battle, off the coast of Chile, he charged the boat at the first encounter and frightened the harpooner into missing him and then, on being accused

of fear, of plunging into the water to drown himself for chagrin. Later Mocha Dick, who had been keeping out of sight though suspected to be still near the ship, was angered at the attack which the whalers made upon a calf and its mother and again charged them. This time the first mate made a surer stroke and, after a furious struggle, got his victim. "Mocha Dick was the longest whale I ever looked upon. He measured more than seventy feet from his noodle to the tips of his flukes; and yielded one hundred barrels of clear oil, with a proportionate quantity of 'head-matter.' "

This material underwent a great alchemy in Melville's imagination. He would not let his Moby Dick be mortal, but carried him unscathed through his adventures and at the end sent him off, victorious, shouldering the troubled waves with his ancient head. Nor would Melville allow the war against Moby Dick to be the plain war of the hunter and the hunted, but gave his hunter the excuse to chase the whale that the whale had chased him and had bitten off his leg. Nor would Melville allow the story to be conducted on the simple plane of mere adventure, but lifted it up into the regions of allegory and symbolism, added the fury of hot passions, drenched it with poetry and dark mystery, lighted it with irony and satire and comic vividness and vast laughter. It was his genius which made the story of Moby Dick important. Because it is important, the neglected story of Mocha Dick deserves at least its little moment.

The first and second members of the firm of Mencken, Nathan, and God must have shouted for joy when they first opened—as doubtless they have opened —the compilation lately made of nearly four thousand "Kentucky Superstitions," in the volume of that name. *The American Credo* had only about an eighth as many vulgar errors, for all its satiric malice. And satiric malice can find nothing in the national mind more primitive than some of the beliefs here set forth. For instance: "To cure a child of thrush, let a stallion snort into the child's face"; "Gunpowder is given to women to facilitate childbirth"; "Catch a toad, put it under a rock, and let it starve to death. After it has dried thoroughly, beat it into a powder, and sprinkle this powder on the person whom you wish to fall in love with you." Doctrines like these recall medieval medicine, aboriginal witchcraft, the jungle, and the cave. And yet side by side with them are recent absurdities as new as the news: "Billikins bring good luck"; "It is well for an aviator to wear a lady's stocking around his neck"; "It brings bad luck for the last of three people to use a lighted match in smoking." The idol has become a Billikin, and the knight wearing his lady's favour has taken to the air,

but these are superficial accidents. Otherwise it looks as if the folk changes not much more rapidly than mountains grow.

The compilers of *Kentucky Superstitions* have in a fashion perfectly impartial printed all they have found (with some expurgations) without distinction of age or novelty, universality or locality. "The good die young," according to one of the citations; and "No news is a sign of good news." Such notions belong to folk-lore everywhere. Others among these Kentucky superstitions are more specific: "If once you get your feet wet in the Cumberland River, you will always return to the Kentucky Mountains"; "It is firmly believed by the people of Leslie County, a mountain county, that President McKinley's name was written by spiders in their webs as a prophecy of his death." There are ceremonies for May Day that point to the rites of Flora: "To become beautiful, wash your face in dew before sunrise on May Day"; there are quaint fancies about Christmas old-style, such as that "At midnight of Old Christmas the elders bloom"; there are sortileges and incantations, divinations and auguries, weather wisdom, dream-lore, signs of the moon and of the zodiac, witchcraft and hoodoos. The most numerous of all are concerned with animals, birds, insects, and reptiles; then follow cures and preventives, divinations concerning love (most of them practised by girls), weather, household and domestic life, the human body, in the order named.

The total result is an amazing palimpsest, as if each

new generation had written its lore upon an original manuscript, partly erasing the old symbols and partly employing them to make new symbols; altering the old text or adapting it; adding new illustrations or comments; bringing in fresh material that flatly contradicts the old. One superstition says that "If you take the next to the last biscuit on the plate, you will never marry"; but another, that in such an event "you will have a handsome husband." A merely mnemonic change may alter the whole point of a saying: "A whistling woman or a crowing hen never comes to a very good end"; but "A woman that whistles, or a hen that crows, has her way wherever she goes." Most of these superstitions are, of course, held by few people, and many by no one very seriously. The more highly educated sections of the state, while represented by a large number of superstitions, report rather trivial ones, for the reason that they are of little importance in the life of these sections. The mountain whites and the Negroes cherish a larger number of superstitions, which are more barbarous but obviously more authentic than those of the lowland whites. "If you drink water out of a stranger's shoe," they say in the mountains, "your sore throat will be cured." This is not so casual an invention as the notion that "It brings bad luck to see an empty street-car." "If you curse God and shoot at the sun, you will be able to see the wind," according to mountain doctrine: according to the Louisville Negroes, "If you cut your eyelashes, you will be able to see the wind."

Such a compilation is genuinely valuable to the anthropologist, the folk-lorist, the historian, the teacher, but to none of them more so than to the student of imaginative literature or, indeed, to the creative writer. Every folk-superstition alluded to in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* is here recorded. Other superstitions in this collection it is easy to remember from various novels and tales of Kentucky life. And yet to read the book with such matters in mind is to realize how little the riches of our folk-lore have been utilized. Consider Thomas Hardy, working away like a profound mole among the buried lores and memories of Wessex, and then consider the so much more trivial, the sentimental use that literary Kentuckians have made of their materials. The ordinary attitude of American men of letters is that inasmuch as we have a briefer history on this continent than Europeans have on theirs, there is hardly an excuse for investigating our own folk-lore and employing it. But, of course, the folk here is as old as the folk there, in any but a political or geographical, and therefore superficial, sense. It has, too, customs and superstitions developed on the native soil. Here is an extraordinarily important field for the imaginative writer to plough. We write of our smart sets, tinkling and cosmopolitan; we write of our Indians and Negroes, looking for essentially native material there; but between these extremes, except in the highly circumscribed "local colour" stories, we have done little to sound the life and opinions of our folk as regards anything deeper

than their outward manners. In *Kentucky Superstitions* we have a document to help us in going deeper. There is the germ of such another story as Hardy's *The Withered Arm* in the Kentucky belief that "You may remove birth-marks by rubbing them with the hand of a corpse." There are poetry and drama both in one superstition from the mountains: "A maid says: 'If I'm not going to marry anybody, knock, Death, knock!' If she hears nothing, she says: 'If I'm going to marry a young man, whistle, bird whistle!' If her appeal remains unanswered, she says: 'If I'm going to marry an old man, hoot, owl, hoot!' "

PAUL BUNYAN GOES WEST

It was idle, of course, to expect that Paul Bunyan would continue to be satisfied with the home in the neighbourhood of the Great Lakes where that mighty man seems to have reached his majority. Call it invented, if you will; true it is that the epic Paul sprang from the imaginations of many lumbermen competing at evening fires for the honour of having told the biggest whopper about the career of Paul the logger's darling. But a ghost of such heroic vigour is not lightly raised; Paul's fame has widened out, by word of mouth alone till very lately, to a thousand camps in many forests; in that sense he has gone himself, for the man lives, like your true epic hero or your politician, by the breath of reputation. Now, as the first chapbook about Paul records for us, he has moved west and done magnificent new deeds under the sunset. The chapbook is called *Paul Bunyan Comes West* and it should make all lovers of Americana and all collectors of chapbooks snatch for it. What are copies of the first *Faustbuch* fetching now?

I admit that Paul Bunyan still lacks his Marlowe and his Goethe, but I contend that he is a fellow at least as well worth keeping an eye on as Bevis of Southampton or Guy of Warwick or any of the Seven

Sleepers of Ephesus or the Seven Champions of Christendom, to say nothing of Jack the Beanstalk-climber or Jack the Giant-killer. In this first book about him Paul Bunyan has fallen into the hands of a certain Yank, still living somewhere in the valley of the Willamette and devoting the hours he can spare from the neglect of his professional duties as camp cook to the elaboration of tales about Paul. Art thus makes an advance upon nature; in real life the mighty Bunyan grows almost by repartee, as when one logger tells one tall tale about his hero and another tries to go him rather better and some third attempts to outdo both; but the epic has its rights. Robin Hood moved from separate ballads to a ballad sequence, and the wily Ulysses from epic lays to the grand march of Homer himself. So Paul Bunyan starts up.

It will be a shame if, like George Peele and some others, he ends in a jestbook and never flies further. Exaggeration such as that in some of the stories presses upon genius. His pick drags behind him on his way West and the first thing he knows he has cut out the Colorado Canyon; he blows the new dinner horn and down fall three square miles of timber; with his Blue Ox to help him he brings an Alaskan glacier down to the States and digs out Puget Sound for the Government; he raises corn in Kansas enormous enough to suck the Mississippi dry and interfere with navigation; he builds a hotel so high that he has "the last seven stories put on hinges so's they could be swung back for to let the moon go by"; his ax "had

a wove grass handle and Paul he jist swung it round in a circle an' cut all the trees within reach to wunst." He has a daughter Teenie of the same heroic breed, an adequate dog named Elmer, and the Blue Ox, Babe, "a 'normous critter—forty ax-handles an' a plug o' Star terbacker between the eyes."

The question what the American imagination will make of Paul Bunyan is a curious one. Will it make him another Hercules or another Munchausen? Or will it extravagantly think itself rich enough to afford to neglect him?

THE WORST AMERICAN BOOK

Now and then an honest superlative is both a luxury and a necessity, and I take real pleasure in declaring my confident belief that the worst book in American literature is one which was written by Milo Erwin of Williamson County, Illinois, and published at Marion, the county seat, in 1876 under the title *The Bloody Vendetta*. Though intended to be an authoritative county history, it concerns itself chiefly with a feud which had lately flourished in the neighbourhood between the Bulliner and Henderson clans, with their allies. Only ruthless quotation can do the work justice.

"On the morning of December 12, 1873, George Bulliner started to Carbondale, on horseback. The sun was standing against the murkey haze of the east, red and sullen, like a great drop of blood. The pearly, vapour-like sails dotted the sky, and covered the more delicately sculptured clouds with their alabaster sides. The great oak trees lifted their parapets to the morning sky, and spangled the earth with shadows. The voiceless winds swept the earth with sublime resignation lawless through the leafless woods, and a melancholy breeze stirred the dead ferns and droping rushes. A cold-scented sleuth-hound had followed the tracks of

Bulliner remorselessly. This morning two of them, with stealthy movement, took their position near the Jackson county line in an old tree top, on the ground. There, planted on the spot, their ears drank in every sound that broke the air, mouth half open, ears, eyes, soul, all directed up the road to catch, if possible, each passing object. . . . Bulliner came riding along and one of the assassins fired on him; only two or three of the balls took effect in his hip and leg; but his horse wheeled and threw his back to the assassins, who fired on him again, and forty-four buck-shot took effect in his back, and he fell to the earth. The assassins then escaped. Bulliner was soon found and carried to the nearest house, and his sons notified, but after desperate riding John reached the place only in time to hear his father say, 'Turn me over and let me die.' He did so, and George Bulliner escaped from the cruelties of earth to the charities of Heaven."

A few months later David Bulliner, another son, was shot, also from ambush. "David was carried home by a host of friends, who had gathered at the gate. At the gate he asked 'Is it a dream? is it a dream?' and each broken word gurgled up out of the red fountain of his life. His brothers were standing around, their faces sealed with the death seal of inexpressible suffering, and their hearts hushed in the pulsation of woes. His mother lay trembling against the casement, her heart throbbing with its burden of sorrow, while the issues of life or death were being waged in the soul of her son. His sisters were standing in the vortex

of misery, praying for the dreadful slaughter to be stopped, and suing for happiness with the sunny side of life in view. . . .

"This was the worst murder of them all. No other equals it in heinousness. You may combine corruption, debauchery and all the forms of degredation known to inventive genius of man, and cord them together with strings drawn from maiden's hearts, and paint the scene in human blood bespangled with broken vows and seared consciences, and still it will redden Heaven with revengeful blush and leave you blacken hell to make it equal."

Thomas Russell, an ally of the Hendersons, was brought to trial for the murder. Here are sketches of certain persons present at the trial: "One of The People's witnesses was Miss Amanda Bulliner . . . about sixteen years old. She took the stand with a helpless and confiding look, her voice was a little softened by emotion, her rose-left lips curled delicately, but soon her clear, translucent eye lit up with a brilliant lustre. The shadows of misery seemed to depart. Her soft, round cheek dimpled and dimpled again, like the play [of?] waters in the sun, in the lovely and touch [touching?] assembly of charms. Her features were of classic regularity. Her presence seemed to shadow the place. So pure, so truthful, so charming her actions, that all pronounced her a most gentle, and most noble creature. Though never a jewelled wreath may span the curls of her beautiful brow, yet, happiness may as well erect its shrine

around her, for Nature can no further gifts bestow. . . . One of the witnesses was the famous Sarah Stocks [John Bulliner and Russell had both courted her], who swore to threats. Her contour is not as faultless as a Greek goddess, but her form and features had caught some new grace from the times. Her eye was as clear and cold as a stalactite of Capri. She wore a sigh, and there is something in a sigh for everybody. But I will throw no shadow over her, for life in her is as mysterious as in the rich belle; and when the golden chariot of destiny rolls through the skies, she may take her seat among the great."

Yet all these charms arrayed against Russell could not convict him. He was acquitted, and, though pursued by the Bulliners, got away. Fate, however, tangled him in the snare of Milo Erwin's prophecy. "If Thomas Russell is guilty, it may be that the almighty sovereignty, love, was too strong for him, and envy seized him, and John and not Davis [David] was the one he wanted to kill. If he could have wrung this lady from John Bulliner, and unstained her life, I doubt not if the shadow of his own would not have again darkened it; and inasmuch as he did not, it may be that the arrowy words wrung by the hand of passion from each of them were destined to hang quivering in memory's core till they festered and bled, making an irremedial wound, shaped in the red-hot forge of jealousy, and cured only by the exultant feelings of gratified revenge. These little bubbles of joy that jet up from the tumultuous waters of passion, soon evapo-

rate, and leave but mingled dross and shame to fester and canker the mind of its possessor, who ever after leads a life of infamy and its accompanying wretchedness. Whoever committed the murders is the guiltiest of them all. It was he who with death first knocked at our portals, and with buck and ball opened the flood gates of misery, and let murder rush with living tide upon our people. And to-day his life is ruined, his hopes blasted, and sooner or later he will come to sorrow, shame and beggary, and have the scorpion thongs of conscience lashing his guilty bosom as he promenades the sidewalks of destiny."

Consider the plight of the Bulliner boys, thus denied justice by the law. "Must they be driven to the bushes by this hard bargain, or be placed for a lifetime at the mercy of assassins, with their hearts enclosed in palisades of sorrow? They saw their father and brother shot down by vandal hands, and their own lives threatened by fiends stalking in midnight darkness. . . . What could they do but pick up the gauntlet hurled into their faces, and give vent to anger long pent up? . . . Embassadors were at an end. Words of menace and expostulation were exchanged for the thunders of the shot gun. . . . The god of the bushes had been invoked."

This is enough to justify my claim for Milo Erwin's book, but I must cite one anti-climax from the sequel touching Marshall Crain, who joined the vendetta and was later hanged for murder. "Soon after, Marsh's wife entered his cell, and he took her on his knees and

embraced her. . . . Her eyes glittered with a metallic gleam, and the soft curl of her lips was lost in a quiver of despair. Her's was a deadly pallor. It was the incandescence, and not the flame of passion, that was burning in her inmost being. She would burst out into shrieks of great anguish, and then subside into sobs. She dreaded the heaving of her own bosom—dreaded the future and the world. If she could have died she would have been happy and holy in the hope of mercy. To be torn from a love made holier by past sorrows, was an insult to the attribute of Heaven. Marsh was in his sock feet, with a pair of jeans pants on, and a ragged jeans coat. He looked care-worn, and shed a few tears."

AT THE SATURDAY CLUB

Few clubs have had a more distinguished membership than the Saturday Club of Boston, not even Dr. Johnson's, to which the Saturday often compared itself in its golden days. It had Boston's best learning, best poetry, best wit, best philanthropy, best statesmanship, and only lacked Boston's best fashion because it had no great fondness for the Cotton Whigs of Beacon Street. Its origins were predominantly literary. As early as 1836 there had been a sort of informal organization which held a "Symposium" now and then, and which Emerson enjoyed for all that it was very clerical and that he said its seal might well be "two porcupines meeting with all their spines erect." This organization languished, however, and Emerson—who here appears as very hungry for companions—and his friend Samuel Gray Ward planned in 1849 a Town-and-Country Club. This also languished under that name; but in the fifties two clubs grew up, existing side by side and more or less interlocking. The Magazine or Atlantic Club, purely literary, gradually faded, or rather gave way to the *Atlantic* dinners; the Saturday Club, for which Ward had suggested a less didactic membership and monthly dinners, was kept alive, clearly in no

small part by Horatio Woodman's special talent as high steward of the feasts, held on the last Saturday of each month except July, August, and September. Some such civilizing influence must have been needed in a group among whom Woodman's introduction of mushrooms as a food seemed a startling novelty. According to Emerson's journal Dwight was chosen to experiment first with the unfamiliar delicacy, and he amiably reported: "It tastes like a roof of a house."

Something more than the fact that the publishers have made Edward Waldo Emerson's *The Early Years of the Saturday Club* somewhat in the likeness of *The Education of Henry Adams* keeps reminding one of that other book, though Adams, nipping critic of orthodox Boston, is nowhere mentioned. The horribly dreary Boston world of Adams's second chapter assuredly did not exist for the Saturday men, a body so festive that when Agassiz returned from Brazil in the summer of 1866, Lowell, Holmes, Fields, and the rest "joined hands, made a ring, and danced around him like a lot of boys, while Mr. Emerson stood apart, his face radiant." In fact, no more genial chronicle of New England in negligee has been written. The Pundits were a long way from the Frog Pond when the Adirondack Club, most of its members then or later members of the Saturday Club as well, went to its first camp in 1858. Holmes would not leave the daily felicities of the Hub, and Longfellow, also no frontiersman, gave as excuse for staying at home the report that Emerson was taking a gun, though in fact Emer-

son never touched man or beast with a bullet. But Emerson was enchanted with the transcendental paradise which he found in the wilderness; and Lowell, younger and robuster, climbed a pine tree over fourteen feet in girth and sixty feet to the lowest branch.

Still, the Club dined more than it picnicked. While it unfortunately had no systematic Boswell, not a few of its good sayings are brought together in the record, particularly as taken down by Emerson in his omnivorous journal. There is Tom Appleton's praise of horse-chestnuts: "I have carried this one in my pocket these ten years, and in all that time have had no touch of rheumatism. Indeed, its action is retrospective, for I never had rheumatism before." And the same wit commented as follows upon a sad defect in the economy of nature: "Canvasback ducks eat the wild celery; and the common black duck, if it ate the wild celery, is just as good, only, damn 'em, they won't eat it." Once William Morris Hunt was asked if he would like to see a Japanese vase or cup which Norton had just received. "Like to see it?" Hunt exclaimed. "By God, it's one of those damned ultimate things." Felton, kept from a meeting by illness, "horizontally but ever cordially" wrote that he was "living on a pleasant variety of porridge and paregoric." Holmes, referring to the immense vitality of Agassiz, said: "I cannot help thinking what a feast the cannibals would have if they boiled him." Judge Hoar declared he valued the Book of Common Prayer for its special recognition of his native town: "O God who art the

Author of good and the lover of Concord." Holmes, no beauty, declared: "I have always considered my face a convenience rather than an ornament." Longfellow, vexed at seeing plover on the table in May, 1858, "proclaimed aloud my disgust at seeing the game laws thus violated. If anybody wants to break a law, let him break the Fugitive Slave Law." Whittier complained to Lowell over some delay in connection with a poem sent to the *Atlantic:* "Let me hear from thee some way. If thee fail to do this, I shall turn thee out of thy professor's chair, by virtue of my new office of overseer." To commentators who tamper with Shakespeare's text, Lowell felt "inclined to apply the quadrisyllabic name of the brother of Agis, King of Sparta"; Felton identified the brother of Agis as Eudamidas.

A characteristic conversation between Holmes and Hawthorne goes thus: "Holmes said quickly 'I wish you would come to the Club oftener.' 'I should like to,' said Hawthorne, 'but I can't drink.' 'Neither can I.' 'Well, but I can't eat.' 'Nevertheless, we should like to see you.' 'But I can't talk, either.' " Actually, Hawthorne hardly ever spoke at the Club, preferring to sit next to Emerson or Longfellow and to let the other speak for him. Once, however, he spoke to amusing effect. Anthony Trollope, a guest, had roared out that only England produced good peaches or grapes. Lowell reports: "I appealed to Hawthorne, who sat opposite. His face mantled and trembled for a moment with some droll fancy, as one

sees bubbles rise and send off rings in still water when a turtle stirs at the bottom, and then he said: 'I asked an Englishman once who was praising their peaches to describe to me what he meant by a peach, and he described something very like a cucumber.' " A brilliant letter from the elder Henry James still further visualizes Hawthorne at the Club: "He has the look all the time, to one who doesn't know him, of a rogue who suddenly finds himself in a company of detectives. But in spite of his rusticity, I felt a sympathy for him amounting to anguish. . . . It was so pathetic to see him, contented, sprawling Concord owl that he was and always has been, brought blindfold into the brilliant daylight, and expected to wink and be lively like any little dapper Tommy Titmouse or Jenny Wren. How he buried his eyes in his plate, and ate with a voracity that no person should dare to ask him a question . . . eating his dinner and doing absolutely nothing but that, and then going home to his Concord den to fall on his knees and ask his Heavenly Father why it was that an owl couldn't remain an owl, and not be forced into the diversions of a canary."

Some of these things were not actually uttered at the Club, but they pretty accurately represented its conversation. An abridgment would have to be almost as long as the book to do full justice to its wealth of material; it would have to repeat countless literary incidents: such as the fact that Lowell for a long

time tried to find out something of Forceythe Willson, only to discover him living in Cambridge within two hundred yards of Elmwood; that E. J. Reed, the Chief Constructor of the British Navy, thought Longfellow had written "the finest poem on shipbuilding that ever was or probably ever will be written"; and that one of the members said Emerson's "good word about a man's character is like being knighted on the field of battle." No one, indeed, emerges from the history in such noble proportions or in such an agreeable light as Emerson. Nor is this due to any partiality of his son. The truth plainly appears that even in the company of Agassiz and Hoar and Holmes and James and Lowell and Norton, Emerson was the spiritual master of the Club. Sumner, on the other hand, though heartily praised in a good many pages, simply refuses to seem attractive. He had the vices of manner for which Boston is too famous—its egotism, its insolence, its complacency. The early history of the Saturday Club goes far toward proving that fame unjust. Its members at least can be called inhuman only in the sense that they were honourable, conscientious, busy, temperate, and kind much beyond the common run of men conspicuously talented. And they lacked neither mirth nor fellowship. Why are their books on the whole not as good as themselves? Did the thinness of the product of most of them come from Puritan inhibitions? The history of the Saturday Club un-

consciously emphasizes a discrepancy, for the men who wrote the gentle, pure, noble, but not too rich or varied classics of New England were themselves men of pretty full blood and high hearts.

To what is due the fact, which can hardly be denied, that the great older magazines no longer dominate the fields of journalism and literature in the United States as they once did? Many answers may be given, and all have been given by observers of varying predilections: that the tide of proletarian vulgarity has risen; that the levels of art have fallen; that public taste demands more violent stimulants; that the non-English elements of our national composition are asserting themselves as never before; that a sharper critical temper has invaded the atmosphere; that the Bolsheviki are among us, red and raging; that our democracy has just begun to live. Each of these is but explanation from one angle. Speaking as historian, I see in that shift of leadership the end of an epoch, the period from about 1870 to 1910 which may be called the Silver Age of our literature.

It is no essential contradiction of that title that during the era there throve such glorious barbarians as Whitman and Mark Twain; they came from a class and a region which flowered later than the Shantung of the nation, the New England of the image-breaking Emerson, the philosophical hired man Thoreau, the transcendental critic and artist Hawthorne,

the fighting Quaker Whittier, the many-tongued translator Longfellow, the jolly Cantabrigian Lowell, the festive Bostonian Holmes. Nor is it a contradiction that at the end of the century came such a rollicking philosophe as William James or such a silken ironist as George Santayana, or such naturalistic young men as Stephen Crane and Frank Norris and Jack London, or such a multitudinous cynic and sentimentalist as O. Henry; or even that during the era lived those three terrible infants of the Adams family, Charles Francis 2d, Henry, and Brooks, to flay the era and all its inherited conceptions. The background and the prevailing colour of the age were still silver. It was then that reminiscence began to enrich the texture of our literary past. Most of the epigones—Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Frank B. Sanborn, for instance—devoted a good part of their lives to writing about the lives of the protagonists. Holmes, of the greater line, wrote memoirs of Emerson and Motley; Howells, later but greater too, gave us dozens of precious memorial essays. Our classics settled into comfortable positions to wait till some revolution should spill them out. Washington as chief national hero gave way to Lincoln, whom the Silver Age softened and sweetened until his angularities hardly showed. The old flaming ardours about manifest destiny considerably cooled, not so much because the national humility was stronger but because there was a stronger sense of decorum current. Poetry was dainty and smooth and rounded as never before in

this country. The short story after many experiments straitened itself to a few prevailing types of a distinctly native form and substance. The novel, with Howells as choragus, even subdued Mark Twain from the extravagance of his earlier burlesques to the suaver annals of Huckleberry Finn and Joan of Arc; and it taught the drama that reality had a place on the stage as well as in books. Our essayists grew lighter and gayer, not without a good deal of orthodoxy and a gusto which somehow seemed to have been trained upon sweet cider, but still mellow and kindly and urbane. After the faun Thoreau, the sage John Burroughs! Scholarship grew to Alexandrian proportions; dissertations showed their heads. At the best, these silver qualities all tended towards art; at the worst they bred dilettantism and languor.

Now such unaccustomed qualities as dilettantism and languor in the midst of a nation which had plunged into furious industrial competition and was beginning to cherish imperialistic schemes without quite realizing what it was about, hardly belonged to the setting. In the Silver Age this discrepancy had seemed not to matter very greatly, for the reason that the opinion of the day held that after all a fairly decisive cleavage exists between art and affairs. The trouble began when a more strenuous generation arose and demanded that literature perform a larger, or at any rate a different, share in the national work. It is a hot and impatient generation, not tolerant of its elders. It damns the gentle tradition by calling

it genteel. It suspects it of lukewarmness, accuses it of prudery, and believes it to have been verbose and trivial. The older magazines were essentially the children of that Silver Age which is now under indictment. The question seems to be whether they can renounce their old virtues, now become sins, and acquire the new virtues, which certainly would have been sins in their proper day.

JOHN BURROUGHS

John Burroughs long seemed old to many of his readers, but measured by anything but mere linear years he was older than he seemed to most of them. Measured, for instance, by reference to the fame of Whitman, Burroughs went back to the days when he was a clerk in the Treasury, and Whitman, then likewise a Government clerk, was dismissed from his post by a Secretary of the Interior who now survives in the memory of his nation chiefly by reason of this episode. Burroughs wrote the earliest book ever written about his greatest friend, and for more than half a century he neither forgot nor long neglected to praise Whitman's large sanity and seerlike wisdom. Measured by the reputation of Thoreau, of whom it was easy for the most casual to perceive that Burroughs was in some fashion a disciple, he went back so far that he had been seventeen when *Walden* came into the world, and he began himself to write about birds and green fields before Thoreau died. And measured by a line even longer than the fame of either Whitman or Thoreau, Burroughs went back so nearly to the origins of American literature that he saw the Catskills, of which he was to remain the particular singer and annalist, within three or four years after Irving,

heretofore acquainted with them only from the deck of a Hudson River boat, had first visited the neighbourhood already sacred to the quite mythical but also immortal spook of Rip Van Winkle.

To mention Irving is to suggest a comparison actually more fruitful than that which some thousands of pens have recently made between Burroughs and Thoreau. The bland old man whose beard was latterly as well known in these States as that of Bryant in its day, had hardly anything in common, except an affectionate concern for external nature, with the dry, hard, vivid Yankee who acted out his anarchistic principles on the shores of Walden Pond and fiercely proclaimed the duty of civil disobedience to all men who might find the world travelling along false paths. Burroughs had in him too much of the milk of American kindness to thrive in a comparison with an authentic genius like Thoreau, who might not be half the naturalist that Burroughs was but was twice the poet and a dozen times the pungent critic of human life. Nor, in another direction, does Burroughs appear to much advantage by comparison with Whitman, who had a cosmic reach and a prophetic lift and thrust that never visited Slabsides. Rather, for all Burroughs employed a modern idiom and took to the country instead of staying snugly in town, he points back to the earlier tradition of smoothness and urbane kindness and level optimism which Irving practised. Did Burroughs not but a few weeks before his death take a mild exception to the "naked realism" of Howells?

In that phrase a very old school speaks. Perhaps we shall in the long run remember best that Burroughs annually made one of an odd triumvirate of campers which included besides him Thomas A. Edison and Henry Ford. Let us, for the sake of seeing the group in its true perspective, call Mr. Ford the village blacksmith who happens to have the fortunate touch of Midas; let us call Mr. Edison the village inventor who happens to have the touch of a mechanical Merlin; let us call Burroughs the village naturalist who to his native instincts adds the winning gift of language and makes himself heard, as his friends do by their machines, outside the village.

BROAD HOUSE AND NARROW HOUSE

There is a broad house of life and there is a narrow house of life. What marks the broad house is not so much the breadth of the walls within which its people live nor the height of the deeds they do or of the passions they experience; rather it is the insulation—as it may be called—which protects their nerves against the agony of too rough contact. Custom is the larger part of this insulation. In the broad house men and women grow unconcerned about irritating things with which they are familiar. The minor imbecilities of their relatives and their companions do not pain them greatly. They do not tug at leashes or kick against pricks or cry over spilt milk or strain at gnats. They can live in the presence of their own thoughts without discomfort. And when custom is not enough to keep the insulation stout, change of scene or mood or occupation mends it. In the broad house memory is not very long. When the occupants begin to feel stifled they stir about and soon forget. When they begin to brood they expose themselves to laughter or excitement and pull themselves together. When they have been bored beyond a certain point they turn to a new job and get lost in it. From too much thinking they take refuge in sleep or liquor.

In the narrow house things are different. Custom does less there, being an insulation which does not fit the sorer nerves. Instead, it rasps them. They wince and keep on wincing more and more at the burden and the pressure of mere existence. Lying so near the surface they suffer from the proximity of other nerves in other people and nearly as much from the proximity of other people without nerves. Men and women who are so tender first feel irritation at minor imbecilities, then pain, then anger, and may go on to madness. The contempt which familiarity breeds is in them an active passion—not, as in the broad house, a comfortable ease or even entertainment. Their memories are too long and too alive for that. Each scratch leaves a scar and the scar smarts for ever. Imagination sets in with the neurotic when he feels stifled or begins to brood or grows bored or finds himself deep in thought. It carries him, as the imagination can, beyond the actual occasion, calling up future or conjectural irritations or injuries and bringing them to wound the nerves, which are already twitching. Retreating from the unendurable frontiers of his experience he lives tautly at the centre, his scrutiny fixed inward. He may hate what he sees there or he may love it.

Narcissus, the youth who loved himself until he died of his passion and was transformed by the gods into a flower, is in some respects the very symbol of the neurotic, whose fate it is to resemble a flower in fragility if not always in beauty or in fragrance. With

a happy accuracy Evelyn Scott, who called her first novel *The Narrow House,* calls her second one *Narcissus.* Her creative faculty has allowed itself to seem submerged by the troubled flood of life which it chooses to represent. It does not laugh, it is rarely ironical or pitiful, it suggests no methods of escape. For the time being it is preoccupied with the inhabitants of the narrow house and with their careers. It accepts their own sense that the doors are locked and the windows tight and that there is nothing to do but to run round and round in the sticky atmosphere. By thus accepting her neurotics Mrs. Scott intensifies her art: she brings her characters upon a cramped stage under a glaring light; she crowds them into a cage which they think a trap and there inspects their struggles. With the fewest reticences she sets them forth, making stroke after stroke of the subtlest penetration, shearing away disguises and subterfuges till she reaches the red quick. What she finds in all of them is essentially narcism.

What further intensifies this biting art is that, narrowed to the narrow house and concentrated upon self-love, it anatomizes and subdivides self-love with minute analysis. The plight of practically all the characters in *Narcissus* has the complication that they are in love and are therefore habitually on edge as they might not be in calmer circumstances. But love does not liberate them. Julia turns from her dullish husband first to one lover and then to another without any genuine escape from the inversion of her desire.

Her husband cannot take her as seriously as she demands; he too is bound up in his own hard self. Her first lover, Allen, has no passion more expansive than a sort of sadistic cruelty; her second, Hurst, none more generous than a sort of masochistic modesty. Paul, the adolescent tortured by the longing to realize himself, flinches at the knowledge of his awkward movements towards freedom. Each of them, looking for love as Narcissus did in his pool, sees in lover or beloved something not entirely expected: sees, that is, another face and not a mere reflection of the looker's. Here lies the particular ground of their irritations. Whereas the lovers of the broad house reach eagerly out for qualities unlike their own, the Narcissuses of the narrow house cannnot endure unlikeness. And as there are no absolute likenesses in nature, they must be disappointed and must agonize.

One of the commonest devices in fiction is to show a narrow house with its inhabitants invaded and purged by a large breath from the broad house. Mrs. Scott denies herself this compromise. Her method, no less than her reading of life, compels her. She marshals her characters in a fugue of pain and exasperation. They have no career, in her novel, besides that of their passions; they do not appear at work or at play or in relaxed moments. When they try to speak lightly they speak stiffly. She never forgets the tense business in hand. That business, obviously, is not to make a general transcript of human existence, but to fit certain materials into a certain pattern in

order to make a work of art. The pattern in this case does not equal the materials. Though the novel has form and proportion, its whole is partly hidden by the brilliance of its parts, which glitter with fiendish thrusts of observation delivered in a style of cruel curtness and vividness. The paths of the characters through the action seem tangled in a multitude of sensations. It is the tone which gives unity: the tone of passionate frustration sustained by art till the familiar sanities fade out of sight and the narrow house has shut out the sun, the wind, the soil, and the healing hands of time. Narcissus, heedless of the broad house, strikes through the skin to the nerves; it finds fierce atavisms, stubborn wilfulnesses, inexplicable perversities, rages, attacks, retreats in the forest, in the morass, in the jungle of the mind.

GOOD NAMES

There are good names and good names. Seedsmen use them to catch young gardeners; lovers woo with them; maps, full of them, become a sweet adventure to the eye; men and women who always wear them please the moralists. And since they play their part in life, they have a part in novels. Consider the course of English fiction, from Defoe to Thomas Hardy, with its many names and fashions of names.

Defoe, who lacked few other realistic arts, seldom named a character. In his anonymous underworld brisk Moll Flanders knows even her husbands better by their callings than by their names. Colonel Jacque speaks of only his fourth wife as if she had been christened. Roxana's Europe has hardly more souls with names than Crusoe's island. Some of the titles seem to come from the stage, such as Count Cog, "an eminent gamester," Alderman Stiffrump, and Christallina the virgin; but Defoe was, perhaps, too much a democrat to care much for names for their own sake. So, it seems, was Richardson, though not in the same way; he named his people, but nearly all in plain and simple terms, as became a blunt tradesman: Andrews, Jones, Williams, Adams, Jenkins, Tomlinson. Pamela, indeed, can tell her children the fates of Coquetilla,

Prudiana, Profusiana, Prudentia, yet the lady herself becomes Mrs. B—— without a backward sigh. At times, however, Richardson grew less neutral and wrote character neatly into proper nouns. Mrs. Jewkes could be only a wicked conspirator, Polly Barlow a faithful maid, Dorcas Wykes full of guile and arts, Sally Godfrey a woman of spirit. Could the Harlowes be people of no breeding, or Miss Harriet Byron? And there are syllables that breathe gentility: Lovelace, Grandison, Sir Rowland Meredith, Sir Harry Beauchamp, Sir Hargrove Pollexfen, Bart.

Fielding, turned novelist, remembered the old comedies of his nonage and christened half his younger children with a pun in his cheek. This is not true of the most important persons, as a rule. Tom Jones, Amelia Booth, Sophia Western, Joseph Andrews, Parson Adams are nearly all as straight from life as Jonathan Wild himself, though Adams and Andrews do come through Richardson. In the second rank fall Mr. Booby, the importunate Slipslop, Heartfree and Allworthy, pictures of virtue, Partridge, whose name has both a poaching and pastoral air, Blifil, Thwackum, Square, and the unrelenting Mrs. Honour. And still further from the centre of his stories belong those men and women whom Fielding has too little time to portray at length but whom he dockets with names very appropriate to them. One thinks of Peter Pounce, usurer-general, the incompatible Tow-wouses, pig-keeping Trulliber, Tom Suckbribe the venal tip-

staff, Mrs. Grave-airs the curious prude, Varnish and Scratch, painters, Arsenic and Dosewell, physicians, Fireblood, Blueskin, Strongbow, rogues all, Betty Pippin and Tom Freckle, rustics body and soul; and then one remembers that such names are less frequent in *Tom Jones* and *Amelia,* by Mr. Justice Fielding, than in *Joseph Andrews* and *Jonathan Wild,* written while the old Harry Fielding was not so far away.

For Smollett, alliteration was almost a necessity when it came to heroes: Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Ferdinand Fathom. In this and other artifices he outdid his age in general, for he had high spirits and he did not fret over little realisms. His sailors, Tom Bowling, Oakum, Jack Rattlin, Tommy Clewline, Lieutenant Hatchway, Pipes, and Commodore Hawser Trunnion, are sailors, that and nothing more. Roger Potion is a druggist, Comfit Colocynth a doctor, Obadiah Goosecap a Quaker, Captain Weazel a coward, Sir Giles Squirrel and Sir Timothy Thicket country gentlemen, Timothy Crabshaw, Dolly Cowslip, and Hodge Dolt, children of the greenest fields. Unsuccessful playwright that he was, Smollett could call an actor Mr. Bellower and a manager Mr. Vandal with a clear conscience and doubtless with some delight. He named a gentleman commoner of Christ Church Mr. George Prankley and he put the smack of Cambria in Cadwallader Crabtree, deaf and caustic.

After Smollett, whom Sterne called Smelfungus, there were many to practise the punning trick, which

lasted, even after Jane Austen, whose names are nature itself, into Scott, who is a world of many natures. History kept him close to fact with a large part of his characters, but he could invent names, when he liked, as rich and varied as his plots. He was most fantastic, perhaps, with his clergymen: witness John Halftext the curate, canny Peter Poundtext, and the Episcopalian Mr. Cuffcushion; witness the two Presbyterian Nehemiahs, surnamed Solsgrace and Holdenough; witness martyred Richard Rumbleberry, covenanting Gabriel Kettledrummle, and the most violent Habakkuk Mucklewrath. Pedants, too, are broadly named in Scott, even to the extent of Jonathan Oldbuck, Jedidiah Cleishbotham, Cuthbert Clutterbuck, Chrystal Croftangry, and Dryasdust, who has fathered a tribe. With some others, besides parsons, the calling gives the titles, as in Tom Alibi the lawyer, Raredrench the druggist, Saddletree, who sells harness, and Timothy Thimblewaite, tailor. Such names are for the sake of comedy, and comedy, with Scott, generally plays with humble life. But he had names for the virtuous poor as well: Caleb Balderstone, David Deans, Dandy Dinmont, and on through the alphabet. Where Scott was best, however, seems to have been at naming those gentlemen and ladies who bring chivalry to his books. What certain signs of birth in the bare surnames Waverley, Redgauntlet, Glendenning, Mannering, Osbaldistone! Could Diana Vernon have changed names with Alice Lambskin, or Lucy Ashton with Meg Dods, or Rose Bradwardine with devoted

Phoebe Mayflower even? Cosmo Conyne Bradwardine has not the same savour as Saunders Broadfoot; Quentin Durward is not of a rank with Giles Gosling. Scott could and did devise fit syllables for every order and station of life.

Dickens had no such pretty courtliness, but spoke brusquely of Lady Coldveal and Lady Jemima Bilberry and Lady Scadgers, Lord Snigsworth, Sir Mulberry Hawk, Sir Morbury Dedlock, Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle. But so he spoke of all the world, making names for every creature like a new comic Adam in a new topsy-turvy paradise. All the power of Smollett passed into him to be enlarged to quite new proportions. Smollett could call a bumpkin Hodge Dolt, but only Dickens could invent the gigantic titles of Nicodemus Boffin, Luke Honeythunder the unlaughing philanthropist, the Pardiggles, rapaciously benevolent, or Chevy Slyme. Smollett, indeed, might have called an undertaker Mould, as Dickens did, a visiting nobleman Count Smorltork, a schoolmaster Bradley Headstone, a canting preacher Melchisedech Howler; might even have named Nicholas Nickleby, Betsy Prig, Sally Brass, Miss Mowcher, Mr. Pugstyles, or Zephaniah Scadder; but Smollett could never have attained to Gradgrind, the Cheerybles, Mrs. Kidgerbury the oldest charwoman in Kentish town, Uriah Heep, Septimus Crisparkle, Daniel Quilp, Pecksniff, Podsnap, or the firm of Chicksey, Veneering, and Stobbles. It is a quality and glory of Dickens that he could caricature words as he did people. Micawber

and Skimpole and Pickwick are caricatures no more than the syllables which name them. Humorous hybrids of language, they sometimes seem to suggest parent words, as if Scrooge were the child of *screw* and *gouge,* and Wardle of *warden* and *waddle,* but they commonly elude analysis and seem new words for new persons.

Thackeray took certain advantages, not only in the linguistic gargoyles of his burlesques but in the wild words he coined from Germany and Ireland. In English, however, he was rather nearer nature and directories. He has his Lord Bishop of Bullocksmithy and the Archbishop of Mealypotatoes, indeed, as well as their humbler brethren of the black cloth, Charles Honeyman the unctuous, Silas Hornblower, missionary, Thomas Tufton Hunt, tufthunter, Felix Rabbits the curate with fourteen daughters, dull Thomas Tusher, and Lemuel Whey, "full of the milk and water of human kindness." The Earl of Bagwig can, without leaving the Thackerayan world, consort with the Earl of Bareacres, Lord Trampleton, who walks on his dancing partners, Lord Tapeworm, Lord Brandyball, Lord Castlemouldy, Lord Deuceace, or with Sir Huddlestone Fuddlestone and Sir Giles Beanfield. Jack Snaffle keeps a livery stable, the Hawbucks are parvenus, George Marrowfat, snob, eats peas with his knife, Poseidon Hicks is a drysalter with a turn for classical poetry, Tom Eaves gossips, Clarence Bulbul has travelled in the Orient, Squire Ballance holds the scales of justice. But these are

fun and ornament. Foreigners aside, Thackeray chose to be more real than Dickens, in this matter, though not commonplace. He leaned a little towards distinction and genteel dignity in his families: the Gaunts, Warringtons, Sedleys, Newcomes, Osbornes, Kews, Amorys, Claverings, Crawleys, Esmonds. The Kickleburys, after all, are snobs, and the Hoggartys are Irish.

Meredith the iridescent does not flaunt such colour in his names as one might expect. He has his puns, or nearly: persuasive Lady Blandish, Farmer Broadmead, Squire Uploft of Fallowfield, Mr. Parsley the curate, Isabella Current, prim and kindly and not young virgin, Mabel Sweetwinter, too fair to be always a shepherdess, Sir Willoughby Patterne the world's model, the swooping Lord Mountfalcon, the blazing Countess of Cressett, Gower Woodseer the poet studied from R. L. S. Meredith has his plain souls: Tobias Winch, of course a green grocer, the immemorial Mrs. Berry, Farmer Blaize, Jonathan Eccles, and Anthony Hackbut. He has his fantastics: Sir Meeson Corby, Lord Pitscrew, Lord Lockrace, Lady Denewdney. But for the most part it is not comedy which names Meredith's characters, but gentility. Lucy Desborough, Dahlia Fleming, Letitia Dale, Clara Middleton, are dewy and fragrant, as are Carinthia Jane Kirby, Clara Forey, Janet Ilchester, Rose Jocelyn, Diana Antonia Merion. And the gentlemen mount from Evan Harrington, son of a tailor, and Blackburn Tuckham, through Nevil Beauchamp, Normanton Hipper-

don, naturally a tory, and the Hon. Everard Romfrey to those superb fathers Sir Austin Absworthy Bearne Feverel, Bart., and Mr. Augustus Fitz-George Frederick William Richmond Guelph Roy, who made princes laugh.

Gentlemen and ladies are not the special care of Thomas Hardy, and yet he has done well by them: witness Elfride Swancourt, passionate, thwarted Eustacia Vye, the Earl of Uplandtowers, Barbara Grebe, who married him, Swithin St. Cleeve, merely a curate's son, and Lady Viviette Constantine, who loved him. One of Hardy's tricks is to match with stout Saxon words others that come from Greece or Rome or Judea, as Cytherea Aldclyffe, Damon Wildeve, Aeneas Manston, Bathsheba Everdene. The effect is like that of the ruins of Roman Britain which always stand behind the scene to lend it depth and tragic atmosphere. And the Saxon words have hints in them. Caroline Aspent is a trembling, uncertain creature, like Thomas Leaf; Donald Farfrae is a wanderer from his own heath; Gabriel Oak will not bend; Sue Bridehead carries into middle age the shock and fear of the bride. Philology, ready servant of art, makes the difference between Smollett's stolid rustics and such as Anne Garland, Fancy Day, Tabitha Lark, Phyllis Grove, Diggory Venn, Giles Winterbourne, and Thomasin Yeobright. Philology, too, makes the comedy more subtle in comic names which Shakespeare could not better: Laban Tall, Joseph Poorgrass, Cain Ball, whose mother had misheard the scripture, An-

thony Cripplestraw, the distressed lovers Suke Damson and Tim Tangs, Tony Kytes, who wooed too many, and Unity Sallet, who declined him. Not even to speak of his dialect and place names, which are unspeakably rich, Thomas Hardy's well-christened children are enough to show that his knowledge goes to the roots of the language.

Of all these, smaller novelists being left out for brevity, which have been conscious of the full savour and perfume of their syllables? What traits come out in the choice? What had the age of each of them to do with it? Who saw the sober hues in Defoe and Richardson, the candid puns of Fielding and Smollett, the large fecundity of Scott, the hugeness and exuberance of Dickens, the polyglot mockeries of Thackeray, the flash and fragrance of Meredith, the deep, native colour of Thomas Hardy? Words, words, words!

PICTURES OF THE PAST

When we read or think about the past, what images actually form in our minds? Take the average American, for instance. He probably has two sets of such images and no more. One is of bunchy persons in preposterous garments—something between a toga and a burnoose—moving over the garish landscape of a Sunday-school card. The other is of heroic gentlemen in the blue-and-buff of the American Revolution, with powdered wigs and elaborate manners, either engaging in battle or else dancing minuets with the furbelowed dames who, like their gallants, abound in the illustrations of the old-fashioned history books. As the blue-and-buff habiliments represent actually a very brief period of history, and those of the Sunday-school pictures none at all, this is but a scanty wardrobe for the imagination. And in matters not quite so sartorial, things are little better. There are probably only a few persons alive anywhere who can sit down and assemble anything like an accurate mental picture of a street in Athens or Rome or Florence or Paris or London or Weimar or Philadelphia, even in the days which mean most and are consequently most studied in the history of those cities. We have generally but the vaguest no-

tions of the physiognomy of the ancients, or even of the remoter moderns. We cannot actually visualize them at their meals, at their work, at their relaxations.

If this is the case now, when we possess libraries of archaeology to draw upon if we care to, what was the case before illustrated books had become common? To judge by the paintings of the Middle Ages, the past then was visualized as merely like the present in its outward details. On the Elizabethan stage the Greeks and Romans were set forth pretty much after the fashions contemporary with the audiences. And even far down through the eighteenth century this custom prevailed. Garrick acted Lear in breeches and wig and nobody minded. It is certain that, while many in his audience would have known better if they had been questioned, they did not experience the shock that we should feel. Lear belonged to an age about which the eighteenth century readers knew little. They were, however, hardly more exact in their images of the Greek and Roman past. Examine, for instance, the illustrations of Pope's Homer, completed a little over two hundred years ago. It was issued in a magnificent folio with elaborate plates. The frontispiece to the second volume, "Troja cum Locis pertingentibus," aims to exhibit the plains of Troy, with the sea in the foreground and at the back the city itself. It is true that the ships have slightly Grecian prows, and the warriors on the plains fight with bows and spears and shields and chariots. But the citadel towers above the surrounding houses sus-

piciously as does St. Paul's above the City of London. The landscape rolls across the page with the soft curves of England. Here and there are English hedgerows, and the brooks and mountains, so far as they have any vraisemblance at all, are of English make. Quaint and incredible! But what chance, after all, had the illustrator for knowing better? Not for a generation did the excavations begin at Herculaneum and Pompeii or Winckelmann begin the great career which taught the world to think of the ancients very much in their true proportions, though not in their true colours or movements. The fact of the matter is that the Renaissance and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, spiritual great-grandchildren of Greece and Rome and worshippers of their ancestors, did not really know what their ancestors looked like. Yet in those ages a great and truthful art grew out of that worship.

The moral seems to be that we lean very little upon definite images in our imagination of the past. The vaguest images will do for most people. Even when we deal with more recent periods and have striking illustrations to help us out, such as Hogarth's for his age, or those of Phiz for Dickens and Ainsworth, or those of the too-much-neglected F. O. C. Darley for the old American frontier, we probably depend less upon them than we think. We create our favoured personages from history or fiction in our own image. Let any reader of an historical novel, even of so incomparably vivid a series of pictures as

Salammbô, examine himself as he reads, and the chances are he will find that, having seized upon a few mental or moral traits of the characters, he follows them by this scent and hardly notices their outward appearances again, any more than he carefully visualizes the landscape, much pleasure as he may take from its presence in the action. Such an examination is likely to show, on simple psychological grounds, that Lessing has not been wholly superseded in his doctrine of the true provinces of poetry and art. It is likely also to make us ask whether the Imagists, exquisite lyrics and vivid episodes as they have produced, can ever by images alone build up any great or sustained illusion of events really transacted in something like a real world.

Modern poets can never praise Greek poetry too much; modern philosophers, Greek philosophy; modern orators, Greek oratory. But the shift away from ancient studies as the basis of all education has tended to leave such employments in the hands of the conservative, or at least of those whose imaginations live largely on the past, and has thus contributed to the notion that practical affairs—economy and polity—are not properly to be studied in Greek literature. To the extent that knowledge has been multiplied since Aristotle's day, this is, of course, true. We cannot look to the Greeks for information which they did not have, and it would be most un-Greek to neglect superior sources of knowledge merely on the ground that other sources were better established in an old tradition. Undoubtedly this alienation of men of affairs from ancient studies has been due less to the deficiences of the Greeks than to the deficiencies of the teachers of Greek, who, so long holding a vested interest in education everywhere, permitted themselves, like other vested interests, to fall into sluggish routine and tyranny, a pitiless round of grammar without sense and of words without life. The reaction against their monopoly has been, like most reactions so forced, ex-

cessive. In our discovery that we had overvalued the scanty amount of grammar and prosody which unwilling students actually carried away from their compulsory struggles with Greek, with the mere letter of its language without any deeper spirit or meaning, many have come to undervalue the Greek world as a laboratory in which, better than anywhere else in history, we may study human beings vividly and rationally engaged in the conduct of human life.

No other laboratory can ever compare with this in importance for us. Racial or national jealousies do not enter into our calculations here. We have no more right as Americans or Britons or Frenchmen or Germans to be jealous of the primacy of Greece in such matters than to be jealous of the multiplication tables because they happen to enjoy a certain strategic position with regard to other facts. It is true that we are no longer allowed the luxury of believing, with the eighteenth century, for instance, that in looking back to Greece we are looking at the very fathers of the race, who "discovered not devised" the rules of nature, which until then there had been no men to find out. All the more, however, are the Greeks instructive to us when we realize that they, too, had to free themselves from immensely ancient bonds of tradition and superstition. What clear reason did for them, ceaselessly revolving and inquiring, it has at least a chance to do for us, if we want it to. Study the Greeks and you are likely to stop hugging prejudices, or taking pride in them. Study the Greeks, and a hundred petty

reverences fall away in a light as lucid as the Athenian atmosphere. Our own day's work concerns us every day, as it did the Greeks, but, as a good maxim says, the man who knows only his business does not know his business. Why will some one not speak out and say what events have lately shown—that a knowledge of history and literature is indispensable in affairs, and that only those men, barring a genius or two, have shown any conspicuous talent for leadership in our terrible decade who have known something about history and literature? It is true. If we were beasts, we should not especially need history; we should have instinct. But having, as men, exchanged instinct for reason, we need as much of the past as we can get—remembering that every man is free, thanks to the multiplication of records, to choose his own past; that is, to choose that part of human history between him and Adam which to him is worth most. The Middle Ages are good to illustrate devotion; the Renaissance, passionate individualism; the rise of the Americas, civilized men pitted against virgin nature. But Greece surpasses them all not only in reasonableness but also in completeness and sharpness of outline. She is the best microcosm, with the scale best adjusted to our vision. She is the best crystal, most purely revealing the vast matters therein pictured; she is the best laboratory, and under the simplest and loveliest conditions exhibits the processes of life which ordinarily appear confused and vexed.

The claim frequently made, that we cannot find in

Greek experience enough that is analogous with our problems, because Greece had so simple and circumscribed an existence and lived in a world so little complicated by machinery, means no more than to say that in a laboratory generations of guinea-pigs succeed one another with a lower mortality than in Guinean jungles, or that diamonds may be made out of their raw materials without the geological convulsions of which in nature they are admirable but accidental by-products. That is what laboratories are for, to exhibit simply the behaviour of complex things. And the parallel between laboratories for matter and laboratories for mind has more than a fanciful value. Life in Greece was reduced to the simple facts of the human intelligence, leaning less than anywhere else upon mere tradition, upon mere materials, upon mere superfluities. Much as we have grown in range of knowledge by our study of the physical universe, and little as we can afford to reject any wisdom founded upon it, we need often to remember that in practice the centre of our universe is still the mind of man, that for the most part we have to conduct our affairs as if really the Ptolemaic system were good astronomy, as it is very fair politics and morals. The study of the material universe and all sorts of highly specialized studies tend to draw us away from these central facts, as pedants and casuists are continually being drawn away from fundamental principles. The principles, however, are still fundamental.

VI. LONG ROADS

THE COSMIC IRONIES

THE Cosmic Ironies sat on a bright island in the midst of the Galaxy, holding a caucus over the universe's affairs. Boötes flamed, Orion glowed, Scorpio glittered, Ursa Major sulked, Eridanus sprawled and yawned, Canis Major and Canis Minor eyed each other distrustfully, Centaurus and Pegasus huddled close and whispered at intervals. Boötes, it appeared, had just been speaking, and there were still reverberations of his great voice in the ether, while the glare of difference or assent with which he had been greeted by his fellows played upon him from every quarter and illuminated the enormous scene, now red with fire, now blue with space, now opaline with shifting moods of the Ironies.

Into this circle, before one of those present had had time to break the meditative silence, came a brisk invader in burning yellow who walked round the seated group and was obviously chagrined to find that no place had been kept for him.

"I say, brothers of the universe," he began, "it seems to me this committee has been closed long enough. It needs new blood. One of you move over and let me in."

If any heard him, at least there was no sign. The

reverberations of Boötes's words travelled farther away and the light from his listeners gradually ceased playing upon him; but the charmed occasion was not apparently disturbed.

"Well, it doesn't seem very hospitable. I sent word I was coming, and look how you receive me. And, as they say on the Earth, I think it isn't representative. The Solar System has a right to be here and a right to be heard. Perhaps we are a little younger than some of you, but that excuse won't hold for ever. Youth, as they say on Jupiter, is no crime."

Somewhere a star exploded and threw a momentary brilliance over the caucus, so that the gems on the brows of the Ironies sparkled as if they were actually Betelgeux and Aldebaran and Spica and Arcturus and Capella and Sirius and Altair. None of the brooding figures started at the explosion, however, much less at the accusations of the Solar Irony.

"Have I got to repeat all I told you before about the ironic work I and my helpers have done in the Solar System? I must say I am tired of telling it You ought not to close your minds the way you do to new inventions and discoveries. The first thing you know you'll all be so out of date that this radical doctrine about the moral government of the world will spread and ruin all your schemes. If you don't wake up pretty soon it won't matter whether you ever wake."

From one of the Ironies a red glow and from another a blue flame and from yet another a white radiance swept around the circle as if looking to see who would

speak next, but, settling upon no one, they mingled in the centre and there rested quietly, splashing the pavement with gorgeous colours.

"Take what's going on in Mars today if you want to test my right to sit in this conclave. I have bilked the Martians into thinking that their everlasting messages to Earth are understood. So those philanthropists have wasted a mountain of treasure making instruments to carry their pompous flashes, and they babble wisdom into the void—as if their wisdom actually mattered or as if Earth would or could pay any attention to it if it ever reached there! You strike me as glum enough, but if you could only see the prophets and poets crowding around that transmitter and pouring all they have and are into it, and then going back to their business with the thick smirk of a duty performed—if you could see that you would laugh a month. That's what I've done in the Solar System: I've trained the higher beings to prattle wisdom till they are hoarse and then not to practise it any more than if they were deaf and had never heard of it."

It may have been some vibration of sympathy which ran through the Ironies or it may have been merely deeper thoughts stirring them to resume the huge discourse.

"For that matter, take Earth alone as evidence of what I can do when I try. The scrawny race of bipeds who think they manage Earth have come up from the slime by the exercise of their wits, trampling the slower races under their heels for thousands of years to

make a bare living, and yet, now they have explored all the paths of Earth and dug up its riches and learned to cultivate its fruits, they are acting as if they couldn't imagine any better future than to take the path back again into the slime. But do they listen to even the petty wisdom a few of them have got at? No, they strut about as they always have, blown up with pride that they are human and not like the other beasts which they have driven into the wilds or else made into slaves. Man, proud man! You should see him. And I have taught him both to be all this and to admire himself. Now why can't I come into the caucus?"

Surely something was stirring in the moods of the Ironies. Ursa Major, who had been almost grey in his sullenness, darted awakened glances around the circle, coruscating, it seemed, with thought. Orion sent out an iridescent gleam, fanned by quicker and quicker breath. The whole place grew so bright that each ironic countenance shone in comparison with the waves of the Galaxy which beat upon the island.

"But I have done more than all that to win my seat. Those same bipeds, who have been clever enough to map and weigh the stars, have made them gods in their own scrawny image and have laid out heavens on the plan of their desires. And I have taught them to lay the blame of their follies on their gods and to call the consequences their just punishment; I have taught them, moreover, to endure whatever comes, no matter how much the fault of men, in the confidence that they will shortly die and be born again into a world which

will make good their wrongs and agonies; I have, in fact, persuaded that tiny race, on its mortal star, that it is the heart and heir and purpose and crown of the universe."

Now for the first time the great silence was broken by bursts of laughter which shook the zenith and perturbed the Galaxy. From each of the giant faces leaped rays of fearful brilliance, revolving like wheels, interlacing in an ineffable net of light. The Cosmic Ironies rocked in their seats with mirth, smote one another on knee and shoulder, tossed their giant arms in paroxysms of delight, and shouted genial invitations to the candidate.

The Solar Irony stepped forward and sat down between Canis Major and Canis Minor, who unhesitantly made room for him.

JUSTICE OR MELODRAMA?

Notions about justice, in the heads of dull or selfish or angry men, have done so much harm that I sometimes despairingly inquire whether it would not be better if the very principle itself had never been discovered. Dull men follow paths which they have been told are just until they ruin them with ruts. Selfish men are just only to themselves with a complacency denied to those who have no doctrine to sustain them. Angry men vindicate their rages and unreason by pointing to the primitive sense—father of revenge and vendetta—from which we with so much difficulty free ourselves in the long progress toward civil conditions. If justice, according to an enthusiastic hyperbole of Emerson's, is the rhyme of things, then the vulgar conceptions of it are no more than tinkling couplets. A blow struck must rhyme instanter with a blow received; an eye rhymes with an eye, a tooth with a tooth, burning with burning, and strife with strife. Or, to allude to another mode of literature, justice in its primitive aspects is merely melodrama, wherein virtue is always rewarded with prosperity and evil is always fatally punished.

The mood which followed the war was the mood of melodrama, on a larger scale, perhaps, than ever

before in human history. Germany, seen solely as a bully and a brute, had been beaten at her own foul game; therefore let her be joyously annihilated, while the gallery gods who filled the theatre of the world almost from top to bottom hooted and gloried at the justice weighed out to her. What made it harder to contend against the uproar was that the uproar at first thought seemed justifiable. Nemesis never looks like so righteous a doctor as when he feeds a poisoner his own poison. But I always suspect first thoughts. For civilization, after all, is but the substitution for first thoughts of second or third or hundredth thoughts, reason supplanting passion, and polity guiding anarchic instinct. Melodrama is what commonly occurs to us first, in the form of those too neat or too hasty moral conclusions to which we are all more or less prone to jump when we allow ourselves to indulge too amply the sense of primitive justice which we share with all the savages of our ancestry.

Men do not, of course, jump too hastily to conclusions merely by reason of their ruder sense of justice. There is involved also a certain obscure instinct toward art, toward rounding out and completing and closing a chapter. Paradox cheerfully says, not forgetting Oscar Wilde, that affairs in 1918-1920 were trying to conform to dramaturgy, that the war was trying to shape itself a good fifth act. But paradox is not needed, for few things are clearer than that centuries of literature were then indeed influencing the world's attitude toward the peace and the treaty.

Obscurely, again let it be emphasized, men had felt that they were witnessing, or acting, the vastest of dramas. The curtain, for them, rose sharply with the Austrian ultimatum and the invasion of Belgium. The sinking of the *Lusitania,* say, was the villain's fatal blunder, which brought against him a fresh, powerful enemy. The odds then deserting him, he hazarded all on a single blow, lost, and came down in a fearful wreck with the spent world falling about him. Was it not due and natural that there should descend another curtain to hide the bloody stage, and that the lights should flash sharply on, and that the spectators should turn away, contented though somewhat subdued, to eat, drink, and make love, possibly commenting upon the actors and their art? Of course the peace on which the curtain fell had to be dramatically satisfying, the villain dead or prostrate and the hero in the ascendant. The sense of form must be served, the taste for melodramatic finality gratified. If the piece ended happily for the victors, justice had been done.

Justice or melodrama? It is only in art, and that not always the truest, that things come out so right. History has no beginning, no middle, no end, but moves everlastingly in some dim direction of which mankind at least does not know the secret. Poets and dramatists may honourably pilfer from history such materials as they require, and may of course work them into forms more compact or conclusive than life itself. But history cannot be handled so masterfully,

for one can never be sure at what point in it one is standing. When the *Lusitania* went down, no one knew whether her loss opened the first act or the last. When America entered the war no one could be sure whether the fourth act of five or of fifty acts had ended. And no one could say that the peace absolutely concluded the drama. The business of the treaty was not to close the war but to open the peace, not to avenge those who died but to preserve those who still lived, not to crown events past with poetic justice, which belongs to the technique of melodrama, but to prepare for events to come by trusting to the higher and humaner justice which is less concerned with righting old wrongs than with trying to foresee and prevent new wrongs—the justice, let me call it, of plain prose.

THE CORRUPTION OF COMFORT

Someone lately asked me by what image I would represent the age that began with the use of steam and ended with the World War. I was not sure that any age had actually ended then, but an image did occur to me. It came from the story of the fisherman in the *Thousand Nights and a Night* who let the Jinni out of the jar and then found him fierce and uncontrollable. But upon second thought I saw that the image was not accurate: the fisherman by using his wits did persuade the spirit back into his copper prison and made a bargain with him which saved the man from death. Then another image occurred to me. It was that of a crew of pirates who chanced upon an unexpected island and there found such incalculable treasure that they went mad with their good fortune, raged up and down the island, extended their fury to a whole archipelago, and at last wound up in a debauch of robbery and slaughter. But neither did this image satisfy me: the people of the last age were not criminals to start with; they were as virtuous as those of any other age on—or not on—record. A better image would be that of some tribe of anthropoids who, after long subsisting on a more or less difficult plane of life, suddenly got hold of a

hundred tricks and secrets which gave them power over earth, air, fire, and water, endowing them with human riches without human discipline.

And yet it is less than fair to make this distinction between men and their lagging cousins of the tree-tops. Not monkeys too abruptly promoted to be men but men come too abruptly into wealth—that is the analogy. Thinking in terms of the long history of the race, look what happened. Never before, to put it broadly, had men been warm enough except in those regions of the earth where the sun warmed them; now they dug up mountains of coal and drew off rivers of oil and fashioned whole atmospheres of gas for fuel; and with these, besides warming themselves, they made such tools and weapons as had not even been dreamed of. Never before, still to put it broadly, had men had food enough; now they discovered how to coax unprecedented crops out of the soil and how to breed new armies of beasts to be devoured and how to catch what the depths of forests and oceans had hitherto denied them and how to create all sorts of novel foods by manufacture. Never before had men, except in dangerous, communal migrations, moved much from their native places; now they made vehicles and ships to go like the wind and in time took to the wind itself for their trafficking until restless tides of human life flowed here and there over the surface of the earth as if men and nations had no such things as homes. Long naked, they covered themselves with preposterous garments and strutted up and down;

long hungry, they stuffed their bellies till they were sick with surfeit; long home-bound, they ran wild till they were lost.

Meanwhile their minds could not keep pace with this enormous increase of their goods. Their ancestors, it may be guessed, had taken centuries to accustom themselves to the use of fire and of the successive machines they had invented; they had taken centuries to find out those parts of the earth they knew. In the last age such processes were accelerated to a dash and a scramble. Things poured in upon minds and overwhelmed them. The century in retrospect has a bewildered look, like a baby at a circus: some art which it could hardly comprehend had brought a universe into a tumbling, twisting focus and the century's head ached with the effort to find a meaning in it. To vertigo succeeded what was probably an actual madness of the race—but a madness with the least possible method. Everywhere a wild activity occupied the faculties of those who followed affairs; and—though the finest intelligences dissented—among the sophists who encouraged such activity was an even greater frenzy of bewilderment.

Call what happened the corruption of comfort. Men had so long been cold and starved and isolated that they clutched at the chance to wrest every advantage from stubborn nature, and they clutched it faster than they could put it to sound uses. Discomfort was one of the penalties of their madness. Nerves in the loud din of the new age learned new agonies. Confu-

sions grew and desperations thrived till the whole earth was on a tension out of which anything might develop. What did develop was the war which wrapped the world in horror. To ascribe it to this or that particular cause or guilt is to see it in terms too small. The race of man was gorged and could not digest its meal; it was drunk and could not control its motions; it was mad and could not understand its course. In the long run the observer of mankind must look back upon the last age as one of the several moments in the history of the race when it has blundered into mania and cruelly hurt itself before it could find its head again.

The race is very old and it doubtless has many aeons still to live before the cooling of the planet sends it back to its aboriginal state. Nor is there use or sense in imagining that the race might return to the simpler conditions that existed before the era of superflous things. Things are. Hope must be seen to lie in the direction of their assimilation by the human mind. Here and there different prophets insist that the mind is on the verge of some discovery as large as Columbus's which will establish a truer balance between it and the matter which now outweighs it. But why put trust in miracles? The madness of the age is more likely to subside gradually, under quiet counsels, as the debauch wears out its influence. Slowly the mind must lift its faith in itself up above its temporary obsession with mere things. It must learn to hold and master all of them which are capable of being held and mastered. It must become accus-

tomed to live among the rest of them as a mountaineer becomes accustomed to live in the city streets after the panic which overcomes him when first he enters them from the high silences and pure outlooks of his native hills.

"GOD IS NOT DEAD OF OLD AGE"

It is a pleasant literary speculation, and not without its moral bearings, to inquire whether the disorder and discontent and chaos now ominous among men may not arise from the fact that the world has grown too large for us to manage—like a lion cub which can no longer be played with or like another mechanical monster which indeed we have created but which refuses to do our bidding any longer. A man of affairs, a financier certainly not acclimated to philosophic despair and certainly accustomed to govern wherever his hand turns, lately ventured such an explanation. It may be, he said, that there is no solution which our reason can arrive at. We look about us for authentic leaders and see none; we pass in review hundreds of counsels but find none that seem in all ways to suit—unless we are doctrinaires; assuredly of all the schemes we have tried no one has been successful. By what right do we assume that some such device for salvation exists? Plagues have come before for which there was no cure. Our crisis may be one of them. It may be that the day of solutions is over. H. G. Wells would have us search history to find our future there—or at least some track pointing to a future we can reasonably confide

in. But perhaps he was just as near the truth in his younger scientific days when he gave us vivid pictures of men who travelled beyond the known areas of our kind, no longer the engineers of their own destiny but drifting about at the convenience of fate. We think of Anatole France, voluptuously contemplating the age when our earth shall have grown too cold for human habitation and men have gradually died away among the ice hummocks of a universal frozen sea. Or, bitterest of all, we remember Thomas Hardy's fancy of the delegate sent up to God to ask about the direful state of the planet, only to learn that God had utterly forgotten us and but dimly recollects that He had made us so long ago and had meant to destroy His experiment when He saw how contemptible it was. Beyond Hardy on that path of reflection lies merely such madness as drove Swift to his Yahoos and Houyhnhnms. And if we dare the path the only escapes from madness are some Asiatic discipline of the will to the peace of acquiescence or some sleek optimism shutting its eyes to all the evidences of horror and chattering and eating and wooing merrily among them.

Along that path lies madness—but we need not take that path. Nor is it a trivial optimism alone that can hold us back. Without doubt too many men and women in the world are too optimistic. After the excessive and artificial strain imposed upon them by the war their spirits have relapsed, their consciences have grown dull, and they have sat down

for a vacation among the ruins. This is one of the innumerable prices which mankind pays for the mad luxury of war. But it is still too early to conclude that civilization is a wreck. Civilization is very old, and every new exploration among its ancient monuments makes clear that it is older than we thought before. The Mousterian, the Aurignacian, the Solutrian, the Magdalenian, the Azilian, the Neolithic ages must each have seen in its particular downfall the end of mankind; and yet thousands of years were still to elapse before there followed what we have till recently called the dawn of civilization. The destruction of the great Minoan city of Cnossus, Havelock Ellis maintains, may have been a more memorable event in the history of human affairs than the catastrophe from which we are trying to recover. To certain types of mind a view of history so extensive as this is like a first realization of the vastness of the physical universe. If time is so long and space so wide we are but momentary and infinitesimal insects whom it is scarcely worth any one's efforts, even our own, to preserve. Yet the advances of civilization have been largely effected through just this enlarging vision of our natures and our cosmic residence. After the first despair, not unlike that of a child strayed from the nursery into a crowd, comes a sense of greater dignity at being part of a structure so vast, a new hopefulness that what has endured from everlasting will still endure. The Spanish peasants have a proverb with which they console them-

selves when there seems no other consolation: "God is not dead of old age." In such a saying Sancho Panza touches Aristotle. Aristotle could think of a universe without beginning or end, moving indeed toward no definite point but moving always through successions of being. Less metaphysical, the peasant knows as truly that rain follows sunshine and harvest the time for planting, and that in each new season the old labours come back to be done again.

In the midst of our worst distresses we have need of some such cooling wisdom. It is, of course, the faith of men who have not hoped for too specific a mortal or immortal career. We do not hasten to console the lover who has lost his mistress by telling him that for ages there will still be love and mistresses. We do not hasten to assure the man who has just failed of a fortune that though he is poor the sum of the world's wealth is still the same. And yet both these things are true. The truth to be remembered is that in the very world where thrive the ardours of the lover and the seeker of his individual fortune, and where tragedy goes with defeat, there exist also such perennial processes as the patience of the grass and the slow healing of time. There is a spacious rule of life which has rarely been formulated but which is probably held by most enlightened men and which better than any other combines ardour with ripeness of reflection—a rule which in effect says that though we should work at our appointed tasks as if everything hung upon success we should after-

wards regard each success or failure as something which really does not matter. Thus only can we advance with our fullest power; thus only can we free ourselves from the past when we are done with it, not moaning too loudly over defeat or being too vainly elated by some little victory. To extremists such an attitude will seem a frivolous compromise. It is the solemn hallucination of the hopeful that by ardour and by ardour alone can the world be saved, and that each defeat of each plan he follows will mean disaster. It is the cheerful prejudice of the desperate that in spite of temporary oscillations here and there nothing is really to be gained by ardours, for when they have cooled the world will continue its decreed procession down a road paved with ardours flattened under its solid tread. But between them is that temperate zone where men are continually warmed by the fires that keep mankind alive and yet draw from the long records of civilization the wisdom that shows them how to keep the fire within its bounds, that it may do its work without waste and destruction.

VII. SHORT CUTS

PETIT UP TO THIRTY

FROM the inquisitive elder Disraeli, Petit the Poet learned that Lope de Vega was a poet from his cradle, and he learned it bitterly, for he was sixteen, and his poetic April lingered. There was great solace in Keats, who had begun to be a poet at an age which gave Petit still two years to falter in. But what of these cradle rhymes of the Spaniard? What of the numerous lispings of Pope to nurse and bottle? What of the spines of satire Bryant put out at three-and-ten, or the *Blossomes* Cowley bore midway his second decade? And Chatterton!

Never mind Pascal and his conic sections, precocious Pliny, or the well-stuffed Hermogenes—monsters, not poets! But to see the years slip by while his own virtues lay still under a cloud of youth was a trial which set Petit brooding full of anger, over the hours he had wasted in play before he had grown conscious of an imperative function. No honourable poet could weigh pleasure against the duty to be great. For all her tricky record, Fortune had never behaved so ill, Petit felt, as when she cheated him of his destiny by fifteen years' stark ignorance of it. There was some comfort in the excuse which he made to himself, that these more forward poets

had beaten him in the race toward the Muses merely because they had had an earlier summons. But this comfort faded when he wondered whether they had not beaten him because their summons had been more genuine than his. Nor could he be much heartened by the spectacle of those who had come later into self-knowledge. Wandering in the wilderness palled no less because of the tribes who shared it with him. The dying, Petit felt, might lie down comforted that patriarchs, kings, even the wise and good, were bedfellows; but the hot thrust of those who looked toward birth wanted none of the cool medicine which encourages death. Those who had to be about Father Apollo's business had little time for beds.

And yet, strenuous as he was for the bright reward, he gave hours to becoming a specialist in the youth of poets. Like a man sick with some lingering disease, he ransacked annals for cases like his own, mad after a sign which would point to an end of his sullen malady of prose. He could tell you at a question when his poets had assumed the *toga poetica,* from Tennyson, covering his slate with blank verse at six or seven, up through Goldsmith, who scarcely touched pen to verse on the poetical side of thirty, to Cowper, who at fifty, a few cheerful bagatelles aside, had only just begun to be a poet. From this learning of his, more truly a scholar than he knew, Petit took examples, despair, and vindications. When he thought of poets he thought of a thin line marching fierily down through all the ages, endless, quenchless, and

himself waiting unsuspected in a prairie village for the tongue of flame which should mark him of their company. When he thought how much he lacked their art and scope, Petit despaired; but whenever despair had a little numbed, he vindicated himself by instancing those who had slept late in the shell.

Thus, year by year, he pushed back the age at which he must come into his powers and fame. By the precedent of Bryant, Petit should have written some new *Thanatopsis* at seventeen, but he got only heartache from that precedent. With what a thrill, then, he learned that Bryant had made the poem over in riper years. Eighteen was harder for Petit to endure. *Poems by Two Brothers,* Poe's *Tamerlane, The Blessed Damozel* (unanswerable challenge), drove him ashamed and passionate to his rhyming. But once again he found out a defence. If Pope's *Ode on Solitude,* written at twelve for lasting honour, was a prank of genius, why not *The Blessed Damozel?* And who would contend with ghosts? Yet he could not remember this assurance when, that year, he found Chatterton's bitter, proud will, and thought of the career which had led so straight toward it.

Some years were kinder, or at least Petit's ignorance saved him, for at nineteen and twenty he kept his courage well enough. But twenty-one threatened him to the very teeth. Drake's *Culprit Fay* mocked him; Holmes's *Old Ironsides* roared at him; Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* enticed him; Milton's *Nativity* ode submerged and cowed him. "No, no," Petit

cried, as he read again these resonant strophes, "I will be a minor poet and never strive with Milton."

Later, by an odd reversal, Petit consoled himself with proofs that the great poet must come slowly to his heights, and he lived for cheerful months on the surpassing badness of Shelley's work before *Alastor,* fruit of twenty-three.

But the years would not cease, nor would they bring Petit's summons. At twenty-two he thought of *Götz von Berlichingen* and thrust his boundary back. Twenty-three taunted him with *Paracelsus* and *Endymion* and Milton's wistful *On his Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-three.* Petit passed twenty-four sickly conscious of *The Defence of Guenevere* and *Tamburlaine* and those cantos of *Childe Harold* which, already two years out of the pen, made Byron splendid in a night. Keats, by having died glorious at twenty-five, made Petit's year desolate. To be twenty-six was to remember *The Ancient Mariner,* Collins's pure *Odes,* and the fair, the fragrant, the unforgettable *Arcadia.* Nor was twenty-seven better: what could Petit's numbness say to *The Strayed Reveller, The Shepheardes' Calender,* and *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect?* With twenty-eight, *The Lyrical Ballads* and *Atalanta in Calydon* saw his hopes begin a slow decline, which dropped off, the next year, amid contracting ardour, past Johnson's *London,* Crabbe's *Village,* Clough's hospitable *Bothie,* into thirty's hopeless wilderness. After thirty poets are not made. And Petit was thirty.

Tall Alp after tall Alp behind him, Petit saw before him only a world of foothills. Yet his journey had been passionate. Now the work he had done was dead leaves, his energy all burned grass, his aspirations dust. And dry and bitter in his mouth was the reflection that the summons might have missed his ear while he had watched his fellows. Had zeal overreached him, some hidden jealousy undone him? What grief and rebellion to know himself cause, agent, and penalty of his own ruin! O black decades to come!

Still, Scott found himself at thirty-four.

IN LIEU OF THE LAUREATE

I am so distressed to see that the Poet Laureate has failed to produce an official ode for the British royal wedding that I hardly know whether to rummage through the archives of the Hanoverians for a substitute manufactured for some earlier occasion or to manufacture a new article myself. I think I shall let learning and poetry both serve me with the help of E. K. Broadus's agreeable new study of "The Laureateship."

Here, for instance, is a part of what the elegant Henry James Pye, George III's laureate, wrote when the Princess Charlotta Matilda of England married Prince Frederick William of Stuttgart:

Awhile the frowning Lord of arms
  Shall yield to gentler Pow'rs the plain;
Lo! Britain greets the milder charms
  Of Cytherea's reign.
Mute is the trumpet's brazen throat,
And the sweet flute's melodious note
  Floats on the soft ambrosial gale;
The sportive Loves and Graces round,
Beating with jocund step the ground,
  Th' auspicious nuptials hail!
The Muses cease to weave the wreath of war,
But hang their roseate flow'rs on Hymen's golden car!

Or if this seems a shade heroic and a little old-fashioned, here are certain lines of Tennyson on the marriage of Princess Beatrice to Prince Henry of Battenberg:

> The Mother weeps
> At that white funeral of the single life,
> Her maiden daughter's marriage; and her tears
> Are half of pleasure, half of pain—the child
> Is happy—even in leaving *her!*

And yet that seems to me to have a touch of insinuation about the fun of getting away from the royal mother which I should be the last to intend—though Tennyson cannot have meant it. Let me turn instead to Thomas Warton and his admirable compliments to a king with the same name as that of the present husband of England's queen:

> Lo! the fam'd isle, which hails thy chosen sway,
> What fertile fields her temperate suns display!
> Where Property secures the conscious swain,
> And guards, while Plenty gives, the golden grain. . . .
> These are Britannia's praises. Feign to trace
> With rapt reflections Freedom's favourite race!
> But though the generous isle, in arts and arms
> Thus stands supreme, in Nature's choicest charms;
> Though George and Conquest guard her sea-girt throne
> One happier blessing still she calls her own—

and that happier blessing was of course the bride.

I find myself coming back to the bride, as one does

when mortals are married. Here suddenly the homely muse of one of our republican poets overtakes me:

This George and Mary Windsor must have lots of sense as well as dust, to let their only daughter marry a man who is quite ordinary—a man at least who never had as good a start in life as dad, but is a boy of their own town, grew up there and there settles down. Well, that is how it ought to be, and if he sticks to business he will thrive and prosper till he may stand before kings and queens some day. And what if the new couple have to work and plan and scrimp and save a few years till they make their pile and can put on a better style? If they attempt it nothing loth it will be better for them both. Then hail the bridegroom and the bride! Let the nuptial knot be tied! Whatever others may prefer, her for him and him for her!

"MURDERING BEAUTY"

At the Butirki prison in Moscow, say certain Frenchmen who were formerly there as involuntary guests of the Bolsheviki, there was a beautiful Lettish girl, at about the remorseless age of fifteen, who acted as official executioner, shooting her victims expertly in the back when they had been chosen by lot and led before her. The brawny Jack Ketch of the old tradition had yielded to a mere flapper, "with unerring aim and a lust for blood."

The French will be French! My mind goes back to some thousands of fine poems and of gallant speeches which have been made by this fine and gallant race upon the theme of "murdering beauty." What after all is so deadly as a lovely eye? It stabs deep with a glint, slays with a glance, and utterly consumes with a level gaze. There is no armour proof against it. Whenever beauty walks abroad it leaves its path strewn with the wrecks of foolish men who have encountered it. It rises in the morning, like the sun for glory, and kills off a few swains who are outside its casement when first it looks out at the new day. It lisps its dutiful orisons, tastes matutinal nectar, and comes forth to begin its proper business. Walking beside some clear brook it topples one venturer after

another into the sympathetic flood. On the smooth enamelled green, where daisies pie the meadow, beauty does its fatal work no less ruthlessly than in secluded arbours or umbrageous grottoes. Then mounted on its favourite courser it takes to the hunt, leaving to others the lighter task of bringing down the boar or catching up with the fox, but itself more deadly among the human quarry who, though hunters, are at last the hunted. Finally twilight, the end of the day, candles, spinet, the dulcimer and the soft recorders, witching sounds and more bewitching silences; but still beauty goes on its conquering course. Not even midnight dims it. When beauty has retired from mortal sight, the lover who had not the luck to come within its range and so be slaughtered, lies disconsolate upon his couch waiting for another day and another chance to dare the killing eyes of beauty.

The French will be French! Even in the dungeon, say the old gallants, they longed for the most murderous gleam of beauty. Better that and annihilation than the long night of safety. Leaning out of his desperate window this or that prisoner, if he beheld some lady walking in the courtyard, would fix his admiration upon her and bend every effort to draw in his direction that killing look. Is there not a story by Kenneth Graham about a headswoman in some courteous region who became so popular that the whole world masculine swarmed to her begging to be slain as a tender personal favour? And did they not swarm so numerously that it embarrassed the land and almost

stripped it of its finest heroes because they chose death by the delicate headswoman rather than life at any less exquisite hands whatever?

I do not know whether it was in this fashion that the prisoners of the Bolsheviki behaved, but I suspect that something of the sort might have happened, so true to form does their ancient gallantry seem to have run. It might have happened; it must have happened. For this is not, after all, history we are talking about. It is romance, romance joyfully conscripted in the war against the enemies of the old order and naturally using the old, old tricks.

CHAIRS

Here and there in the rural districts people still talk about professors as holding chairs in this or that subject at some college or university. When they do this they make me remember that the chair was once cousin to the throne. It was an affair of some state. Our remotest ancestors did not sit on chairs; they sat on branches when they had time to sit at all. Our mediate ancestors, having come down to earth, sat on it, or on the floors of the houses they built, or on any odd piece of furniture that came handy. Chairs marked the great who used them, such as kings and senators and bishops. Only our most immediate ancestors, in the last few centuries, ever thought of having enough chairs to go round. Within the memory of plenty of living men quite respectable households, even in the United States, have required children to stand at meals, partly because there were more children than chairs and partly because it did not seem worth while to get more chairs for the relatively unimportant members of the household. Now everybody has chairs—even infants and dolls and dogs and cats; even prisoners in jails; even professors, in fact as well as name. The race has grown sedentary.

What, the moralist inquires, is to be the effect of all this sitting? Not being very moralistic, I answer calmly that the chief effect is to make people fatter than they used to be. The vital and sanitary statistics that are always appearing about the increase of the average age and height of mankind never have a word to say about the increase of average weight. But it is clear that the race is heavier and that chairs have helped to raise the ponderous average. When the race sat on branches the fat men broke the branches, fell, and broke their necks. When the race sat on the floor the fat women grew lean by getting up and down so often. Nor after chairs came in did fatness evolve at once. To have to move one of those primitive settles a few times a day was enough to keep weight down; to sit on their oaken planes and angles was never comfortable enough to make the laziest do it long. Did the Puritan Fathers and Mothers fatten sitting in the straight-backed chairs and pews of their age? No, it remained for the padded and upholstered chair to do the work, for the rocker and the morris chair, for the sprawling chair of the hotel lobby and the trustees' room.

Consider what happens. The most strenuous man of business, when he sinks into a chair in the hotel thinks dimly—if he is literate enough for that—about "taking mine ease in mine inn" and fattens almost under the very eye. Yet even this is nothing to the process in the trustee's chair. Something drowsy hangs over it; something soft slumbers in it and in-

fects the sitter. The moment the trustee sits down he feels his spine agreeably melting; he slips deeper in his seat and listens to the committee reports as from a muted distance; he has a sense of power which he realizes it is manners to exercise quietly; he looks with sleepy disapproval upon plans to raise salaries or cut dividends or reinvest funds or elect new trustees; he softens till he is scarcely vertebrate; his bones matter less and less; in time he does not know which is chair and which is he. The fatness of the chair has struck upward to his head. As a certain poet of the primitive has it:

Men in chairs
Put on airs.

If, as it was reported dimly, the war in Ireland reached the Aran Islands, then there is no spot left untouched in that ancient kingdom and new free state. The story says the forces of the English Crown heard those windy western islets harboured men on the run, and went after them, patrolling the sea with boats and raiding the land. Two civilians are said to have been killed in the mimic battle, three wounded trying to escape, and seven arrested. But only the barest details ever got back to Dublin.

Like enough there were men on the run here and there among the island cottages. There have always been. Didn't John Synge when he was on the islands hear of a Connaught man who killed his father with a blow of his spade because he was in a passion, and who fled to Inishmaan, where the natives kept him safe from the police for weeks till they could ship him off to America? The impulse to protect the criminal is universal in the Irish west. Chiefly this is because the people, "who are never criminals yet always capable of crime," feel that a man would not do a wrong unless he were under the influence of an irresponsible passion. But partly, too, it is because "justice" is associated with the English. How much

more than in Synge's day was that the case in the day of this episode when "justice" was trying to level Ireland under its iron feet, and many a fine young man must have had to run to Inishmore or Inishmaan or Inisheer! Even in Synge's day the most intelligent man on Inishmaan declared that the police had brought crime to Aran. The Congested Districts Board has done something to modernize Killeany, but elsewhere the island population changes very slowly.

A quaint story has come to light about the islands. They were being used, it says, by the Irish Republic as a place of internment for its prisoners, though there is, of course, no jail there. And it seems that when the forces of the Crown crossed Galway Bay from the mainland and offered these prisoners their freedom they rejected it completely, desiring rather to stay where they were than to go free to any other part of the British Isles whatever. I see the seed of legends in this story. Pat Dirane, the old storyteller who made Synge's day delightful, is dead now; and Michael (really Martin McDonagh) has married and come to America. There will be others, however, to carry on the tradition among a people who still pass from island to island in rude curaghs of a model which has served primitive races since men first went to sea; who still tread the sands and invade the surfs of their islands in pampooties of raw cowskin which are never dry and which are placed in water at night to keep them soft for the next day; who make all the soil they have out of scanty treasures of clay spread

out on stones and mixed with sand and seaweed. Old Mourteen on Inishmore told Synge about Diarmid, the strongest man on the earth since Samson, and believed in him. Pat Dirane told tales that were the island versions of *Cymbeline* and *The Merchant of Venice,* tales known elsewhere in the words of Boccaccio and of the *Gesta Romanorum.* Michael's friend sang "rude and beautiful poetry . . . filled with the oldest passions of the world." How then shall the story die of how men who were put away on Inisheer or Inishmaan or Inishmore found that prison sweeter than freedom and would not go back when the chance was offered them?

SWEETNESS OR LIGHT

Jonathan Swift who invented the phrase "sweetness and light" and Matthew Arnold who made it what it has become are not themselves precisely a congruous pair; but then, neither are the qualities they bracketed. Or at least they occur together in the minds and tempers of none but the utterly elect. Most persons who have either of them have never more than one or at best have only one at a time. Consider, for instance, your perfect optimist: he is a mine, a quarry, a very bee-tree of sweetness, a honey-dripping fellow, a foaming pail of the milk of human kindness. But when now and then the light falls on him from some alien source he shrivels or scurries to a shady nook where the illumination is not so deadly. Or consider your perfect pessimist: he is a vial of light imprisoned, a storage battery charged with the sun, and unless the properest precautions are taken he explodes when sweetness touches him.

But then, however, consider those eclectic citizens who go in for both at once. They usually undertake to be sweet in a light way or to be light in a sweet way. When they are lightly sweet they flit through the sunshine with the prettiest iridescence, stopping

at all the prosperous flowers but stopping no longer than a moment and never really exhausting the deepest stores of sugar at the heart of the blossom. When they are sweetly light they sport admirably in the sun in the morning hours while its beams are still young and generous and again toward the evening after mellowness has set in; but they do not often care to venture into the noon at its full splendours. Sweetness, it appears to most of them, is a question of the coat rather than of the constitution; light, it appears to most of them, comes from the air itself rather than from the fire which uses the air merely as it medium. If they had studied the history of sweetness they would realize that it is the fruit of powerful processes working with matter not altogether sweet itself and arriving at the final essence only with patience and strife and victory. If they had observed the methods and effects of light they would understand that though it can heal it can also kill and that though it may throw a radiance around plain things it can quite as truly strip off glamour and halo and luxurious subterfuge.

It is a lamentable arithmetic which has led millions to put sweetness and light together and to make out of the combination something less than either might be by itself. Each has been played off against the other as an excuse. If you follow light too far, says sweetness, you will grow fierce and lose me. If you follow sweetness too far, says light, you will grow soft and forget what I have taught you. Here is the

danger. Left to themselves, sweetness and light quarrel a hundred times for once they kiss. Even Socrates and Shakespeare must have had many hours when the war was hot within them. Was Swift, for all his light, ever really sweet? Was Arnold, for all his sweetness, not now and then negligent of the light while he mooned it with his Senancours and Amiels and missed the point of the diamond which Heine actually was?

For my part, while urging no one to refrain from being a Socrates or a Shakespeare if he can, I hint that light was first in the universe and that sweetness, invented since, is its creation. If I cannot have them both I choose light.

Crowning the Bishop

Apse, altar, architrave,
Chasuble, rochet, pyx, chimere,
Clerestory, nave,
Throne, mitre, incense, sheer

Surplices like snow,
Choir boys carolling like throstles:
It was not so
With Jesus and the lean Apostles.

VIII. A CASUAL SHELF

HONESTY IS A GIFT

A GOOD many people think that honesty is a trait which a man chooses out of the various traits offered him by life. Perhaps it is nearer the truth to think that honesty is a gift, and innate, like a man's complexion or the shape of his skull. It can be hurt by abuse or encouraged by proper treatment, but its roots are deeper than experience. Clarence Day must have been born honest and he has, so far as I can see, never done anything to waste his birthright. The eyes with which he looks at things are as level as E. W. Howe's, but his language is lighter and his fancy nimbler. In *This Simian World* it was his fancy which perhaps did most to get him a hearing. In *The Crow's Nest,* without giving up his fancy, he ranges over more varied fields than in his first book and seems even wiser. He has a perfect temper. He has known pain but it has not soured him—or at least his book. He has known passion but it has left no visible ruts or hummocks in his mind. He has done all that a human being can do with his reason but he feels no resentment that reason at its best can do so little. Having a perfect temper he sits at ease in his crow's nest and surveys the deck, the sailors, rival ships, the waves,

the horizon, and the sky, without heat, of course, but also without pride in his position or in his self-control. Having a perfect temper he is not harried into any violence of style by his instinct to express himself. As shrewd as a proverb, he never plays with epigrams. As much of a poet as he needs to be, he yet seems to have no need for eloquence. Such lucidity as his is both prudent and elevated.

He is primarily an anthropologist, as he showed in *This Simian World*. The race of man is for him "a fragile yet aspiring species on a stormy old star." It has lived a long while and has gone a long way from its original slime, but plenty of the old stains still colour its nature. Its impulses are tangled with the impulses of the ape and with the inhibitions of the amoeba. "The test of a civilized person is first self-awareness, and then depth after depth of sincerity in self-confrontation." By this test Mr. Day is thoroughly civilized. Nor does he merely search in his own mind and admit what he finds there. He observes others with the same awareness and the same sincerity. Hardy, he sees, takes his pleasure in portraying gloom. "That's fair," says Mr. Day. Shaw has had a vision of the rational life that men might lead and can never stop insisting that they lead it: a master of comedy when he paints the contrast and rather tiresome when he insists too much. Maeterlinck is king in the realms of romance he has created, like any other child; he is also a child when it comes to judging the "real" world. We know what Fabre

thinks of wasps, but we wish we knew what the wasps think of Fabre. Mr. Day's ideas are never gummed together with their hereditary associations. He talks always as if he had just come into this universe and were reporting it for other persons as intelligent as he. What a compliment to mankind! And what a compliment to mankind, too, that he should find it quite unnecessary to lecture it! A whimsical fable, a transparent allegory, a scrap of biography, a few verses, a humorous picture—these are his only devices.

Snuffy, prosy men always keep pawing over the poets. It is bad enough when they are only literary critics, but when they are theologians there is no length to which they will not go. Think what has happened to that radiant anthology which the late Morris Jastrow translated and edited as his final work, *The Song of Songs*. Originally, it seems clear, a collection of popular lyrics which the Hebrew folk prized so highly as to insist on giving them a place in the sacred canon, these poems have been argued and allegorized to what would have been the death of anything less indestructible. While the Stoics were "explaining" Homer, partly Hellenized Jews began to interpret the *Song of Songs* as an expression of Yahweh's love for Israel and then Christians as an expression of Christ's love for his Church. Learned scholiasts wallowed in commentary, declaring, for instance, that the phrase "eyes like doves" referred to the wise men of the Sanhedrin or to the thoughts of God directed toward Jerusalem. Augustine saw in "where thou reclinest at noon" a hint that the true Church lay under the meridian—that is, in Augustine's Africa! Bernard of Burgundy composed eighty-six homilies on the first two chapters. The

Jewish Saadia, writing in the tenth century, detected in the *Song of Songs* a complete history of the Jews from the Exodus to the coming of a twelfth-century Messiah; and Thomas Brightman in 1600 drew the prophecy down to Luther and Melancthon. Not until the Enlightenment, in the hands of Lowth and Herder, did criticism become more direct and reasonable. Even after that the passion for finding some kind of unity in the book led even such scholars as Ewald, Delitzsch, Renan to explain it as a rudimentary drama, with Solomon as one of the characters. There were, of course, always heretics, like Thomas Hardy's Respectable Burgher, who slyly rejoiced to learn

> "That Solomon sang the fleshly Fair
> And gave the Church no thought whate'er,"

but they were generally outside the beaten track of doctrine.

Mr. Jastrow brought to his labours on the *Song of Songs* at once the erudition and common sense with which he had already edited *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* and in addition a feeling for youth and love and poetry which his latest theme particularly required. In a masterly introduction, utilizing all that is known about the book and reducing it to convenient form for a wide audience, he cuts away the accretions of centuries while tracing the fortunes of this golden treasury with its cloud of commentators. Then he offers a new translation divided into twenty-three separate lyrics, each

of which he equips with adequate yet simple notes, purging the text of intrusive variants and glosses, explaining the allusions, sympathetically pointing out the grace and spontaneity of the poems. In his treatment the *Song of Songs* is restored to an ancient status which gives it a fresh, modern meaning. Once more the Palestinian villagers have come together at a wedding; once more they sing exquisite songs about the joys of love which no thought of theology invades. Lover and beloved praise one another's charms in glowing imagery. Alone, each longs for the other; united, they rush to ecstatic, unabashed consummation of their desire. This is love at its rosy dawn, tremulous, candid, exultant. This is what Wilfrid Scawen Blunt had in mind when he declared in his diary that he would rather have written the *Song of Songs* than all the rest of literature.

Regarding Europe as an intricate republic with all its interests close-knit and its equilibrium exquisitely sensitive, François de Callières in 1716 published at Paris a vade-mecum for diplomats which has been translated and issued in a handsome edition by A. F. Whyte as *On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes.* "Secrecy," says Callières, "is the very soul of diplomacy"; and his manner of expounding the manners of negotiation might almost be that of some accomplished mole long employed by his monarch in listening for ground-tremors in all parts of the garden, learning where traps were set and ploughs expected and where the roots grew sweetest and lushest, and finding out the shortest way to them and back in safety. Discretion, however, not deceit is the method Callières urges. The ideal diplomatist must be "a man of probity and one who loves truth." "It is true that this probity is not often found joined to that capacity for taking wide views which is so necessary to a diplomatist." He should have learning, experience, penetration, eloquence, as well as the most equable temper, the most easy gallantry, the quickest repartee, the most tireless patience; he must be courageous without being rash, dignified without being mysterious,

wealthy without being too proud of his purse, well-bred without being haughty. He must dispense gifts generously, though he should rarely take them, and he should do his bribing like a gentleman, in the due fashion of the court to which he is accredited. In a democratic state he should flatter the Diet—and feed it, for good cheer is an admirable road to influence. He should have a flair for nosing out secrets as well as a genius for hiding them; his use of spies is the test, almost the measure, of his excellence. "The wise and enlightened negotiator must of course be a good Christian." Machiavelli explained princely policy and Chesterfield worldly polish no more lucidly than Callières, who was private secretary to the Most Christian King Louis XIV and ambassador and plenipotentiary entrusted with the Treaty of Ryswick, explained the devices and virtues of his craft. He had high standards for diplomatists; he wanted them to be better-trained, better valued, and better rewarded than they were. He thought they should be men of letters and men of peace. He would not have held himself to blame for assuming that the relation between even friendly princes was that of ceaseless rivalry and that the first interest of each was to take something from the others. Those were the assumptions of the age. Callières was merely pointing out, with tact and charm, how the members of the diplomatic corps might best observe all the punctilios that go with honour among the most precious thieves.

LAWYER AND ELEGIST

Every one knows Clarence Darrow as a fighting labour lawyer, a double-handed berserker of the bar. Only his friends know that at heart he is an elegiac poet. Yet any one who wishes may find this out by reading his exquisite half-novel, half-autobiography, *Farmington*. It has unstinting veracity; it has mellow moods and ivory texture. The book rises naturally from the spirit, dear to the American tradition, of tender affection for some native village. Thousands of men daily dream thus of childhood, but the pictures which come before them are dimmed by short memory or distorted by sentimentalism or falsified by some subsequent prejudice. Mr. Darrow's *Farmington*, it is true, lies continually in a golden haze, melts and flows, increases and then diminishes like a living legend. The colours, however, have grown truer not fainter, and the forms of his remembered existence more substantial if less sharp-edged. Richly and warmly as he visualizes that perished universe, he has not brought in illusions to multiply his pleasure in it. What gave him pain as a boy he remembers as pain and will not make out to have been a joke. What gave him delight he remembers as delight, not as an offence to be expiated by an older conscience.

Such dreams do not lie. They are the foundations on which truth mounts above facts. To *Farmington* they impart a firmness which enables an honest reader to move confidently among its lovely pictures without the sense that a breath may shatter them. The ringing laughter of Mark Twain's *Hannibal* never sounds through Mr. Darrow's softer pages: herein lies a limitation of *Farmington,* its lack of a large masculine vitality. But that, of course, is just the quality which we have no right to ask for in an exquisite elegiac poem.

WOMEN IN LOVE

The hunger of sex is amazingly set forth by D. H. Lawrence, whose novel *The Rainbow* was suppressed in England and who has now brought out his *Women in Love* in the United States in a sumptuous volume delightful to eye and hand. Mr. Lawrence admits no difference between Aphrodite Urania and Aphrodite Pandemos; love, in his understanding of it, links soul and body with the same bonds at the same moments. And in this latest book of his not only is there but one Aphrodite; there is but one ruling divinity, and she holds her subjects throughout a long narrative to the adventure and business and madness and warfare of love. Apparently resident in the English Midlands, Gudrum and Ursula Brangwen and their lovers Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich actually inhabit some dark wood sacred to Dionysiac rites. If they have an economic existence, it is of the most unimportant kind; at any moment they can come and go about the world as their desires drive them. If they have any social existence, it is tenuous, or at best hardly thicker than a tissue of irritations. War and politics and art and religion for the time being are as if they had never been. Each pair recalls those sundered lovers of whom Aristo-

phanes told the guests at Plato's Symposium—lovers who, in reality but halves of a primordial whole, whirl through space and time in a frantic search each for its opposite, mad with delay, and meeting at last with a frantic rush which takes no account of anything but the ecstasy of reunion.

If references to Greek Cults come naturally to mind in connection with *Women in Love,* these lovers none the less have the modern experience of frantic reaction from their moments of meeting. They experience more than classical satiety. Mad with love in one hour, in the next day they are no less mad with hate. They are souls born flayed, who cling together striving to become one flesh and yet causing each other exquisite torture. Their nerves are all exposed. The intangible filaments and repulsions which play between ordinary lovers are by Mr. Lawrence in this book magnified to dimensions half heroic and half mad. He has stripped off the daily coverings, the elaborated inhibitions, the established reticences of our civil existence, and displays his women as swept and torn by desires as old as the race and older, white-hot longings, dark confusions of body and spirit. Gudrum and Ursula are women not to be matched elsewhere in English fiction for richness and candour of desire. They are valkyries imperfectly domesticated, or, in Mr. Lawrence's different figure, daughters of men troubling the sons of God, and themselves troubled. No wonder then that the language which tells their story is a feverish language; that the

narrative moves with a feverish march; that the final effect is to leave the witness of their fate dazed with the blazing mist which overhangs the record. Most erotic novels belong to the department of comedy; *Women in Love* belongs to the metaphysics and the mystical theology of love.

MOSES IN MASSACHUSETTS

More than thirty years after Brooks Adams first flayed his ancestors in *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* a new edition of the book has appeared with the original text and a novel preface. What Mr. Adams has added, besides an expression of regret for his earlier acrimony of speech, is an account of the philosophy to which he has arrived after three meditative decades. Although he belongs to the ineffably disillusioned generation which bred also Charles Francis 2d and Henry Adams, Mr. Brooks Adams is still an Adams: he thinks with the hard lucidity and writes with the cold downrightness of his tribe. The central point of his doctrine is touched upon almost in passing: "And so it has always been," he says, "with each new movement which has been stimulated by an idealism inspired by a belief that the spirit was capable of generating an impulse which would overcome the flesh and which would cause men to move toward perfection along any other path than the least resistant. And this because man is an automaton, and can move no otherwise." The emancipation of Massachusetts, Mr. Adams has presumably come to believe, was merely an irresistible movement of the commonwealth away from the ideal-

istic impossibilities to which it was originally pledged and to which the conservatives vainly tried to hold it. Once they seemed villains; now they seem fools and dupes.

But Massachusetts is the least of the concerns of this preface, one half of which is devoted to the deeds and character of Moses, an optimist who thought he had found some supernatural power and could control it, tried leadership, discovered that he must after all depend on his own wits, sought vainly to "gratify at once his lust for power and his instinct to live an honest man," and, after bilking the Israelites in the little matters of the Brazen Serpent and the Tables of the Law, went up into Mount Nebo and committed suicide. (Tom Paine would have liked to write this account of Moses.) The Mosaic idealism having failed, there followed the Roman confidence in physical force, which the Romans erected into a sort of vested interest, in turn also overthrown by the Christian confidence in divine aid secured through prayer—"a school of optimism the most overwhelming and the most brilliant which the world has ever known and which evolved an age whose end we still await." Thus optimisms rise and fall, but the life of mankind rolls forward without observable acceleration or retardation, only now and then heated here or there to an explosion by some sort of conflict between powerful interests, generally economic. The past shows no variation from this procedure; the future holds forth no hope except in a change to some form of non-com-

petitive civilization which Mr. Adams does not venture to propound. Depressing enough in details, the preface as a whole is one of the most provocative arguments in American literature. Some day the allied and associated pessimism of Brooks Adams and his two brothers will seem hardly a slighter contribution to America than the diplomacy of their father or the statesmanship of their grandfather and great-grandfather.

BROWN GIRLS

The ardours celebrated in *Coloured Stars: Versions of Fifty Asiatic Love Poems,* by Edward Powys Mathers, have not been uttered in original English poetry since the days when the young Marlowe and the young Shakespeare lavished the wealth of Elizabethan eulogium upon the gorgeous bodily beauties of Hero and Venus—and even those ladies, all red and white, seem a little cool and proud compared with the browner girls who kindle such infinite desires in Asian lovers. The poets whom Mr. Mathers has here rendered with delicate skill represent almost every corner of the continent, yet the most frequent note in the collection is the flaming praise of radiant mistresses, pictured not so much in the lover's hours of longing as in the hot moments of the fruition of his desire. For sheer intensity it would be hard to equal the two Afghan poems, *Black Hair* and *Lover's Jealousy,* or the Kurdistan *Vai! Tchodjouklareum*—full of raptures as barbarously naked as the girls they praise. Out of the same fury comes the Altai *War Song,* which sets forth the most tempting charms of love, only to vow that still better are the arrows and sabres and black horses of battle. The Burmese *My Desire,* only a little less passion-

ate, is more philosophical. What most differentiates this anthology from any similar one that could be made from European literature is the comparative absence from it of the deep humility of the lover before the person or the thought of his beloved. These lovers are nearly all superbly confident. More civil moods, however, appear in the Hindustani pieces, which are not without a note of fear and distrust of women as chilly jilts. True to our preconceptions, the Japanese poems are the daintiest, all but one in the accustomed five-line stanza, and each one an exquisite picture associated with tender longings; and the Chinese poems seem most familiar, most universal, in feelings and ideas. Without the abandon of the poems from western Asia, and with less than the hard, bright compactness of the Japanese, they are exquisitely truthful and humane. It is notable that only the eastern Asiatics are here represented as giving expression to the woman's emotions, as if in the west, women, at the worst the victims of desire, were at best only an ear to hear of it, never a voice to speak it out.

INVENTION AND VERACITY

There may be a line which separates fiction from biography but it is a metaphysical affair about which no one need worry much. On one side, let us say, is invention and on the other is veracity; every biographer, however, has now and then to invent, and veracity is often indispensable to the novelist. It is strange that the two forms have so rarely been compounded: that, for instance, so few authors have written biographies of imaginary persons. The mixture is particularly tempting. It makes possible at once the freedom of the novel and the sober structure of the biography; it has the richness, though perhaps also a little of the perverseness, of certain hybrid types. In *Peter Whiffle* Carl Van Vechten has crossed the two literary forms fascinatingly. His hero has a *fin de siècle* look about him, as if he were, perhaps, a version of Stephen Crane or of one of his contemporaries. When Peter first dawns upon his biographer he has in mind to beat such decorative geniuses as Edgar Saltus at the art of producing fine effects by the sheer enumeration of lovely or definite things: he will make his masterpiece the catalogue of catalogues. Later, he has shifted to the mode of Theodore Dreiser, having been con-

verted by *Sister Carrie*, and is a revolutionist wedded to the slums. Eventually he turns to the occult and the diabolical and ends in about that spiritual longitude and latitude. Does Peter suggest some of Max Beerbohm's men too much? The question will be asked. At least it is certain that he is piquant, arresting, brightly mad. Whether in Paris or in New York he glitters in his setting. And that setting is even more of a triumph than the character of Peter. Mr. Van Vechten, however he made up his protagonist, has taken his setting from life: actual persons appear in it, actual places. He deals with it now racily, now poetically. He is full of allusions, of pungencies, of learning in his times. He knows how to laugh, he scorns solemnity, he has filled his book with wit and erudition. He is a civilized writer.

A HERO WITH HIS POSSE

If literature is not cosmopolitan when a Japanese-German publishes in the United States in English a book dealing with the life of the great Jew whose deeds and doctrines, recounted in the Greek of the Gospels, serve as the basis of the Christian religion, when is it? Sadakichi Hartmann's *The Last Thirty Days of Christ* will sound to the orthodox a good deal like George Moore for irreverence and a little like Anatole France for slyness. Ostensibly the diary of the disciple Lebbeus, also called Thaddeus, it explains the miracles as so many quite rational affairs and ends with Jesus dying like a mortal man in a garden at Emmaus; in the most realistic language it shows Lebbeus asking Jesus if he is to "swipe" the ass on which the Master entered Jerusalem, describing the shapely legs of the Samaritan woman, and recounting with vigour and gusto the pranks of the dusty, naked apostles in the Jordan. Bull-necked Peter, "fierce, stubborn, easily roused, but devoted to the Master like no other"; "flamboyant Judas Iscariot, a strangely magnetic personality"; "sturdy, straightforward James and sad and headachy-looking John"—John being the Boswell of the expedition; doubting Thomas, "a lean elderly crab-apple sort of a

man"; "old 'muffled-up' Bartholomew, of whose face at no time one could see more than a snivelling nose"; Matthew, "practical, shrewd, determined that something great must be the outcome of all this personal discomfort and marching about"—these and the others are keenly drawn to what may have been life—of course no one knows. The apostles talk metaphysics behind the Master's back and undertake plans for "something great." Indeed, the betrayal appears as merely Judas's scheme for bringing matters to a head and forcing Jesus to call on the "legion of angels" which he had said he could command. Alas, the apostles could not comprehend their Teacher, his humour, his paradoxes, his hyperboles, his strength in tenderness, his nature so rich and full that he could be ascetic without drying up. He stands in this book, wherein the arguments of Renan are made flesh, as a companionable saint—not a god at all—who is still marked off from the intensely human group about him by a mystery and a glory which are Sadakichi Hartmann's tribute to his power and which in Christian art have been symbolized by the bright aureole around his head.

The face of *Batouala* is the face of Esau but the voice is the voice of Jacob. Paris speaks through René Maran, as it spoke recently through Louis Hemon and his *Maria Chapdelaine:* the Paris which is subtle yet bored with subtlety and cruel yet bored with cruelty and eager for art yet bored with art. Such complex towns are hungry for idyll and for epic, the more so if, sitting at the centre of an empire, they can look out toward dim provinces and see idyll and epic transacting on their own soil. Paris, looking into French Canada, is thrilled along unfamiliar nerves at the sight of the girl of Peribonka who, having lost her dearest lover, chooses rather to stay in that hard native wilderness than to take what comfort may be found in softer regions: it is as if some Arcadian maiden had preferred Arcadia to Athens or some Shropshire lass had preferred Shropshire to London. So Paris, looking into French Africa, exults over the deeds of the black chief Batouala, who loves and fights and loses and dies, like a bison or an eagle, without a thought deeper than sensation and without a future longer than quick oblivion. *Batouala* is no primitive piece of art: no naïve ballad of the people; no saga, remembering the harsh conflicts

of actual men; no epic even, calling up the large days of Agamemnons and Aeneases and Rolands and Siegfrieds and Beowulfs for the edification of smaller days. It is a document of civilization, of civilization turning, with a touch of nerves, from the contemplation of itself to a vicarious indulgence in the morals and manners of the jungle which, whether they exist in Africa or not, exist somewhere beneath the surface of every civilized person.

To say this is to say that René Maran, though himself of Batouala's race, has learned in Paris to make Parisians understand him and that the fame of his book depends upon his skilful use of a sophisticated idiom. But there is more to be said than that. *Batouala* is a document as well upon the process by which an inarticulate section of mankind is beginning to be articulate. Out of the heart of a dark continent comes a tongue which uses neither the rant of the imperialist nor the brag of the trader nor the snuffle of the missionary. That tongue is hot with hatred for what Europe has done to Africa through the exercise of a greed which is the more malevolent because it is incompetent. The world of Batouala is a world spoiled by alien hands and laid waste as fever and tribal wars never laid it waste. Back of the quiet accents which M. Maran uses is the impact of a whole race's wrongs and resentments. And yet those accents are quiet, for the book, though not primitive art, is art of a high order. It is, says M. Maran in his preface, "altogether objective. It makes no at-

tempt to explain: it states." Being a genuine work of the imagination, *Batouala,* of course, is less impersonal than its author believes it to be; its material is shaped at every point by a hand which, beating with the pulse of Africa, loves these contours and expresses its passion through them. Its passion, however, has been so guided by principle that it is emphasized by reticence much as that reticence is warmed by passion. In the circumstances, a plain story is enough, given, too, merely as a series of etchings from the career of Batouala, and only partly concerned with his relations to the whites. Candid pictures (considerably softened in this translation) of his daily life and final tragedy pass vividly by: all the customs and rites and sounds and stenches of his village, the throbbing of drums, the ferment of sexuality, the conflict of races, the pressure of nature upon man, the irony of primitive plans, the pity of primitive defeat. A great novel? Not quite, because it is febrile and fragmentary. But it has some of the marks of greatness upon it: energy, intensity, vitality.

STUPID SCANDAL

The story that Abraham Lincoln was an illegitimate son became a matter of gossip about the time of his first nomination for the presidency and was given a wide if stealthy circulation by the malice of the disaffected. He himself always spoke with reticence of his ancestry, for the reasons that he believed his mother to have been born out of wedlock and that, supposing his parents to have been married in Hardin County, Kentucky, he had looked in vain for the record of their marriage which was all the time lying in the court house of Washington County, where Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks had been married 22 September, 1806. Lamon's biography in 1872 first put the scandal into print, though in veiled language. Since then it has been repeated in varying forms, for the most part obscurely and always uncritically. While there has never been any good excuse for crediting it, there has come to be a better and better excuse for undertaking to refute it. That has now been done by William E. Barton in *The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln,* a convincing study which leaves not a square inch of ground for the scandal to stand on. Mr. Barton's researches have been exhaustive and—barring a few minor slips—accurate;

he follows the rules of evidence in a way to put to shame those many lawyers who on such trivial testimony have believed the story; at the risk of making his book too bulky he has included practically all the documents in the case; he writes everywhere with good temper, although he might well have been forgiven for being vexed at the inanity or insolence of most of those who have argued that Lincoln was the son of this or that Tom, Dick, or Harry.

Mr. Barton's arguments remove most of the charges into the territory of the ridiculous. Abraham Enlow of Hardin County, Kentucky, for instance, turns out to have been no more than fifteen—perhaps fourteen—years old when Abraham Lincoln was conceived. As to Abraham Enlow of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, there was no such man. George Brownfield, of what is now La Rue County, was real, and may have known Lincoln's father and mother as early as eight or nine months before the child was born, but no scandal ever touched Brownfield's name in this connection for fifty years after 1809, and then the yarn was apparently invented because the story of Abraham Enlow of Hardin County to the older citizens in the locality seemed untenable. The "Abraham" Lincoln of Ohio who was formerly identified with the President, and about whose birth there was a scandal, turns out to have been named John. Abraham Inlow of Bourbon County is said to have paid Thomas Lincoln five hundred dollars to marry Nancy Hanks, who already had a child named Abraham; as a matter of fact, the pair

had been married nearly three years when their son was born, and there is nothing in the Abraham Inlow story that even hints at an adulterous connection. If such an affair ever took place it concerned a certain Nancy Hornback. The rumour that Martin D. Hardin was the father of Lincoln died of its own impossibility with the discovery that Lincoln was neither born nor conceived in Washington County, where Hardin lived. Patrick Henry, occasionally asserted to have been Lincoln's father, died ten years before Lincoln was born. The foolish affidavits which attempt to credit the paternity to Abraham Enloe of North Carolina are too ignorant and contradictory to be noticed. That a foster son of John Marshall was Lincoln's father seems unlikely in view of the fact that Marshall never had a foster son; this report is about of a piece with another which says that one of Marshall's own sons was the father of Nancy Hanks, when as a matter of fact she was a year older than the eldest of them and might have been the mother of the youngest. John C. Calhoun may possibly have indulged in a flirtation with a young woman at a tavern at Craytonville, North Carolina, in 1808–9, and she may just possibly have been a Nancy Hanks, but she cannot have been Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who had already been married for two years and had been living in Kentucky, it seems on good evidence, since early childhood.

All this is sheer gossip, motivated partly by an ugly desire to hurt Lincoln's fame and partly by a

vulgar attempt to account for his genius by giving him a father more promising than Thomas Lincoln. At the worst it is disgusting; at the best it is stupidly unimaginative, for the Hardin, Henry, Marshall, Calhoun stories are singularly frail, and the Enlows and Inlows and Enloes of the legend were certainly no more likely to beget a genius than the actual father. Even the Baconians have chosen a great man to explain Shakespeare with. The only use of the whole matter is to throw some light upon the way in which in unenlightened ages, when there was no Mr. Barton to investigate the facts and lay the ghosts, various nations of mankind have sought to explain their heroes and leaders of humble birth by finding for them, among gods or demigods, fathers more suitable than the plain men who, such is the mystery of genius, are all that need be taken into account.

The Muse of Knickerbocker

We guiterman a volume when,
  Though but one pen can rightly do it,
We view it reasonably, then
  With ripe and rippling rhymes review it.

(How delicate should be the eye,
  How deft and definite the hand
Of the audacious poet by
  Whom Guiterman is guitermanned!)

This Arthur with the nib of gold,
  The quaintest of the critic carpers
Who sang New York, has sung the Old
  Manhattan now in ballads (Harpers).

The color of his music moves
  From Dobson's to our Yankee Doodle's;
Assay his mixture, and it proves,
  However, Guiterman in oodles.

He sings the founders: "Kips, Van Dorns,
  Van Dams, Van Wycks, Van Dycks, Van Pelts,
Van Tienhovens, Schermerhorns,
  And Onderdoncks and Roosevelts."

Of Tappan Zee, of Nepperhan,
  Of Hellegatt, of Spuyten Duyvil,
Of 't Maagde Paetje, Guiterman
  Here rhymes in rings around each rival.

Adieu vers libre, adieu the news,
  Adieu the horrid shilling-shocker;
We hail the marriage of the Muse
  To Mynheer Diedrich Knickerbocker.

IX. POETS' CORNER

GREEK DIGNITY AND YANKEE EASE

THE single solid volume of Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Collected Poems* holds without crowding all but a few lines of the verse into which one of the acutest of Americans has distilled his observations and judgments during thirty studious, pondering, devoted, elevated years. Never once does Mr. Robinson show any signs of having withdrawn his attention from the life passing immediately under his eyes; but he has no more frittered away his powers in a trivial contemporaneousness than he has buried them under a recluse abstention from actualities: he has, rather, with his gaze always upon the facts before him, habitually seen through and behind them to the truths which give them significance and coherence. That he from the first chose deliberately to follow an individual—however solitary—path appears from a very early sonnet, *Dear Friends:*

> The shame I win for singing is all mine,
> The gold I miss for dreaming is all yours;

that he from the first deliberately chose the path of stubborn thought rather than of genial emotion appears from his unforgettable *George Crabbe:*

> Whether or not we read him, we can feel
> From time to time the vigour of his name
> Against us like a finger for the shame
> And emptiness of what our souls reveal
> In books that are as altars where we kneel
> To consecrate the flicker, not the flame.

In the nineties, when England was yellow with its Oscar Wildes and Aubrey Beardsleys and America was pink-and-white with its Henry van Dykes and Hamilton Wright Mabies, Mr. Robinson was finding himself in the novels of Thomas Hardy—the sonnet on whom has been omitted from this collection—and fortifying himself in the study of Crabbe's "hard, human pulse." His absolute loyalty to the ideals of art and wisdom thus achieved is a thrilling thing.

The long delay of the fame to which he had every right may possibly be held in part to account for his countless variations upon the theme of vanity—even of futility, of which he is the laureate unsurpassed. Leaving to blither poets the pleasure of singing the achievements of the successful at the top of the wave, Mr. Robinson took for himself the task of studying the unarrived or the *passé* or the merely mediocre. Consider Bewick Finzer,

> Familiar as an old mistake,
> And futile as regret;

consider Miniver Cheevy, who wept that he was ever born because he could not stand the present and longed for the colours of romance—

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
And kept on drinking;

consider the Poor Relation, who has perforce outstayed her welcome and on whom

The small intolerable drums
Of Time are like slow drops descending;

consider the women-maddened John Everldown, and Richard Cory committing suicide in the midst of what the world had thought triumphant prosperity, and Amaryllis shrunk and dead, and Aaron Stark so hard that pity makes him snicker, and Isaac and Archibald each telling their little friend that the other has grown senile, and the graceless, ancient vagabond Captain Craig discoursing gracefully from his death-bed like some trivial Socrates, and Leffingwell and Lingard and Clavering—

Who died because he couldn't laugh—

and Calverly and that incomparably futile Tasker Norcross whose

tethered range
Was only a small desert,

and yet who knew that there was a whole world of beauty and meaning somewhere if he could only reach it—all these are the brothers and the victims of futil-

ity. Even when Mr. Robinson ascends to examine the successful he bears with him the sense of the vanity of human life. The peak of his poetry is that speech in which Shakespeare, in *Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford,* likens men to flies for brevity and unimportance:

> Your fly will serve as well as anybody,
> And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,
> And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;
> And then your spider gets him in her net,
> And eats him out and hangs him up to dry.
> That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.
> And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom,
> And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.
> It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
> It's all a world where bugs and emperors
> Go singularly back to the same dust,
> Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars
> That sang together, Ben, will sing the same
> Old stave tomorrow.

And in his great flight into legend, in *Merlin* and *Lancelot,* Mr. Robinson elected to view a crumbling order from angles which seem opposite enough but which both exhibit Camelot as a city broken by frailties which on other occasions might be heroic virtues: Merlin follows love to Vivien's garden at Broceliande and the kingdom of Arthur falls to ruin because it has no strong, wise man to uphold it; Lancelot leaves love behind him to follow the Light, like a strong, wise man, but the Light dupes him as much as love has duped Merlin, and ruin overtakes Camelot none the

less. This is Mr. Robinson's reading of existence: We are all doomed men and we hasten to our ends according to some whimsy which establishes our hours soon or late, leaving us, however, the consolation of being perhaps able to perceive our doom and perhaps even to understand it.

What is it that holds Mr. Robinson, with his profound grasp of the tragic, from the representation of those popular, magnificent hours of tragedy when—as a more pictorial critic might say—the volcano bursts from its hidden bed and the thunder reverberates along the mountains? Well, Mr. Robinson is a Yankee, free of thought but economical of speech; he is another Hawthorne, disciplined by a larger learning, a more rigorous intellect, and a stricter medium. The light of irony plays too insistently over all he writes to allow him to indulge in any Elizabethan splendours. His characters cannot rave. They, too, in a sort, are Yankees poet-lifted, and they must be at their most eloquent in their silences. Consequently the fates which this poet brings upon his quiet stage must all be understood and not merely felt. He gives the least possible help; he pitilessly demands that his dramatic episodes be listened to with something like the tenseness with which the protagonists undergo them and without alleviating commentary or beguiling chorus; he never ceases to cerebrate or allows his readers to. Such methods imply selected readers. They imply, too, on the poet's part, that he pores too intently over the white core of life to look long or

often at the more gorgeous surfaces. If Mr. Robinson has any strong passion for the outward pageantry of life—such as men like Scott or Dickens have—he does not communicate it. His rhythms throb with heightened thought not with quickened pulses, or only with pulses quickened by thought. No line or stanza escapes his steady, conscious, intelligent hands and runs off singing. Endowed at the outset with a subtle mind and a temperament of great integrity, he has kept both uncorrupted and unweakened and has hammered his lovely images always out of the purest metal and in the chastest designs.

To lay too much stress upon the tragic and the fateful in his work is to do it, however, less than justice. It contains hundreds of lines of the shrewdest wordly wisdom, of the most delicate insight into human character in its untortured modes, of rare beauty tangled in melodious language. He has employed the sonnet as a vehicle for dramatic portraiture until he has almost created a new type; he has evolved an octosyllabic eight-line stanza which is unmistakably, inalienably, inimitably his; he has achieved a blank verse which flawlessly fits his peculiar combination of Greek dignity and Yankee ease; he has, for all his taste for the severer measures, taught his verses, when he wanted, to lilt in a fashion that has put despair in many a lighter head. Nor must it be overlooked that Mr. Robinson has written some of the gayest verses of his generation, as witness these from the ever-memorable *Uncle Ananias:*

His words were magic and his heart was true,
  And everywhere he wandered he was blessed.
Out of all ancient men my childhood knew
  I choose him and I mark him for the best.
Of all authoritative liars, too,
  I crown him loveliest.

How fondly I remember the delight
  That always glorified him in the spring;
The joyous courage and the benedight
  Profusion of his faith in everything!
He was a good old man, and it was right
  That he should have his fling. . . .

All summer long we loved him for the same
  Perennial inspiration of his lies;
And when the russet wealth of autumn came,
  There flew but fairer visions to our eyes—
Multiple, tropical, winged with a feathery flame,
  Like birds of paradise. . . .

Pascal D'Angelo was born, he says in an autobiographical sketch which he has let me see, "near the old walled city of Sulmona, Italy. It is a small town in the beautiful valley that was once the stronghold of the Samnites, walled in by the great blue barrens of Monte Majella. Few roads run to this quiet land and ancient traditions have never entirely died out there. Below the town is the garden of Ovid with its wild roses and cool springs, and above is an ancient castle that in summer is fantastically crowned with the mingling flight of pigeons which take care of their young on its towered heights. In the valley below are finely cultivated fields dotted with the ruins of Italica, the capital of fierce Samnium." There Pascal D'Angelo went to school a very little during his childhood, handicapped by the fact that his parents at home could neither read nor write and that, because of their poverty, he was frequently obliged to stay at home to herd the family's six or seven sheep and four goats. At sixteen he came with his father and a number of fellow-villagers to the United States.

"In this country immigrants from the same town stick together like a swarm of bees from the same hive

and work where the foreman, or 'boss,' finds a job for the gang. At first I was water-boy and then shortly after I took my place beside my father. I always was, and am, a pick-and-shovel man." Pascal D'Angelo worked here and there at similar rough labour, in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, West Virginia, Maryland—at first unable to read newspapers printed in English and unaware that there were any printed in Italian. But gradually he learned to read, and always he was a poet. "When night comes and we all quit work the thud of the pick and the jingling of the shovel are not heard any more. All my day's labours are gone, for ever. But if I write a line of poetry my work is not lost, my line is still there—it can be read by you today and can be read by another tomorrow. But my pick-and-shovel works can be read neither by you today nor by another tomorrow. . . . So I yearn for an opportunity to see what I can accomplish . . . before suffering, cold, wet, and rheumatism begin to harm me in the not distant future."

One of the finest lyrics of his which I have seen thus gives a picture of the world in which he then moved:

In the dark verdure of summer
The railroad tracks are like the chords of a lyre gleaming
across the dreamy valley,
And the road crosses them like a flash of lightning.

But the souls of many who speed like music on the melodious heart-strings of the valley

Are dim with storms.
And the soul of a farm lad who plods, whistling, on the
lightning road
Is a bright blue sky.

As a result of being taken by a bar-tender to an Italian vaudeville show on the Bowery, the boy began to write—a farce, jokes, anecdotes "of the type for my class of people." Then he bought a small Webster's dictionary for a quarter and set out to master it. His companions laughed at him, but he persisted tirelessly. "I made them understand by spelling each word or writing it on a railroad tie or a piece of wood anywhere, just to express myself." As his ardour and his reputation grew some young brakemen undertook to discipline him. "What they did was to bring new words every morning. They used to come half an hour before working time and ask me the meaning of the new words. If I could answer the first word all was well and good; then they were quiet all day. If not, when noon came all the office people, both men and women, crowded the place where everybody was present and tried to show me up. But their trials and efforts were all useless, as useless as I could make them. But one day they brought me before all the crowd, just to have me ridiculed perhaps, because they all were high-school lads. So they brought five words of which I knew only three. Then they began to proclaim themselves victorious. But I gave them two words they did not understand. Then I bet them I could give them ten words, and two more for good

measure, that they could not understand. And I began: 'troglodyte, sebaceous, wen, passerine, indeciduity, murine, bantling, ubiquity, clithrophobia, nadir'; and instead of two I added seven more to make their debacle more horrible. So I again wrote seven more words with the chalk which they provided me, writing them against the office façade where every one could see their eternal defeat: 'anorexia, caballine, phlebotomy, coeval, arable, octoroon, risible.' Then to complete I added 'asininity' and explained its meaning to them immediately. . . . After that triumph they named me 'Solution' and all became friends."

Later he went to Sheepshead Bay to hear "Aïda" in the open air. "Suddenly when I heard the music I began to feel myself driven toward a goal—a goal that became more and more distinct each day. There were parts of such eloquent beauty in that opera that they tore my soul. At times, afterwards, even on the job amid the confusion of running engines, cars, screams, thuds, I felt the supreme charms of the melodies around me." But he could not compose music, for he did not know one note from another—"as I still don't know. . . . Music is not like the English language, that I began to write without a teacher. . . . In poetry I fared better. In the library I wandered upon Shelley and was again thrilled to the heart. Shelley I could proceed to emulate almost immediately. . . . It was a hard job to put my words in order. The stuff I used to write at first was unthinkable trash. But I was always bothering people to point

out my mistakes. Grammar gave me plenty of trouble and still does. Rhyme stumped me. Then I began to read all kinds of poetry and saw that rhyme was not absolutely necessary. I also discovered that a good deal of what is called poetry is junk. So from the first I have tried to avoid echoing the things I have read, and to bring an originality both of expression and thought."

Pascal D'Angelo has taught himself French and Spanish and has read most of the best poets of those tongues as well as of English and Italian. At present he is living under the most difficult conditions, asking no favours, and writing poetry which, though much of it is naturally full of imperfections, occasionally strikes such notes as these in *The City:*

We who were born through the love of God must die
through the hatred of Man.
We who grapple with the destruction of ignorance and
the creation of unwitting love—
We struggle, blinded by dismal night in a weird shadowy
city.
Yet the city itself is lifting street-lamps, like a million
cups filled with light,
To quench from the upraised eyes their thirst of gloom;
And from the hecatombs of aching souls
The factory smoke is unfolding in protesting curves
Like phantoms of black unappeased desires, yearning and
struggling and pointing upward;
While through its dark streets pass people, tired, useless,
Trampling the vague black illusions
That pave their paths like broad leaves of water-lilies
On twilight streams;

And there are smiles at times on their lips.
Only the great soul, denuded to the blasts of reality,
Shivers and groans.
And like two wild ideas lost in a forest of thoughts,
Blind hatred and blinder love run amuck through the city.

TAP-ROOT OR MELTING-POT?

Recent American poetry is to recent British poetry somewhat as New York is to London. Its colours are higher and gayer and more diverse; its outlines are more jagged and more surprising; its surfaces glitter and flash as British poetical surfaces do not always do, though its substances are often not so solid or so downright as the British. Nowhere in America have we a poet of the deep integrity of Thomas Hardy, a poet so rooted in ancient soil, ancient manners, ancient dialect. Nor has England a poet shining from so many facets as Amy Lowell, or a poet resounding with such a clang of cymbals—now gold, now iron—as Vachel Lindsay. Experiment thrives better here than there; at least, our adventurers in verse, when they go out on novel quests for novel beauties, are less likely than the British to be held in by steadying tradition, and they bring back all sorts of gorgeous plunder considerably nearer in hue and texture to the flaming shop windows of Fifth Avenue than to those soberer ones of Bond and Regent streets. Even John Masefield, most brilliant living poet of his nation, runs true to British form, grounded in Chaucer and Crabbe, fragrant with England's meadows, salt with England's sea. Edgar Lee Mas-

ters, as accurately read in Illinois as Masefield in Gloucester, writes of Spoon River not in any manner or measure inherited with his speech, but more nearly in that of the Greek Anthology, by Masters sharpened with a bitter irony.

In all directions such borrowings extend. Even the popular verse men of the newspapers play daily pranks with Horace, fetching him from the cool shades of wit to the riotous companionship of Franklin P. Adams and George M. Cohan. China and Japan have been discovered again by Miss Lowell and Mr. Lindsay and Witter Bynner and Eunice Tietjens and a dozen others; have been discovered to be rich treasuries of exquisite images, costumes, gestures, moods, emotions. The corners of Europe have been ransacked by American poets as by American collectors, and translators at last are finding South America. Imagism has been imported and has taken kindly to our climates: H. D. is its finest spirit, Miss Lowell its firmest spokesman. Ezra Pound is a translator-general of poetic bibelots, who seems to know all tongues and who ransacks them without stint or limit. With exploration goes excavation. Poets are cross-examining the immigrants, as T. A. Daly the Italian-Americans. The myths and passions of Africa, hidden on this continent under three centuries of neglect and oppression, have emerged with a new accent in Mr. Lindsay, who does indeed see his Negroes too close to their original jungles but who finds in them poetry where earlier writers found only farce or sentiment. Still more

remarkably, the Indian, his voice long drowned by the march of civilization, is heard again in tender and significant notes. Speaking so solely to his own tribe, and taking for granted that each hearer knows the lore of the tribe, the Indian must now be expanded, interpreted; and already Mary Austin and Alice Corbin and Constance Lindsay Skinner have worked charming patterns on an Indian ground. At the moment, so far as American poetry is concerned, Arizona and New Mexico are an authentic wonderland of the nation. Now poets and lovers of poetry and romance, as well as ethnologists, follow the news of the actual excavations in that quarter.

Indian and Negro materials, however, are in our poetry still hardly better than aspects of the exotic. No one who matters actually thinks that a national literature can be founded on such alien bases. Where, then, are our poets to find some such stout tap-root of memory and knowledge as Thomas Hardy follows deep down to the primal rock of England? The answer is that for the present we are not to find it. We possess no such commodity. Our literature for generations, perhaps centuries, will have to be symbolized by the melting-pot, not by the tap-root. Our geographical is also our spiritual destiny. The old idea of America-making in its absurd ignorance demanded that each wave of newcomers be straightway melted down into the national pot and that the resultant mass be as simply Anglo-Saxon as ever. This was bad chemistry. What has happened, and what is

now happening more than ever, is that of a dozen—a hundred—nationalities thrown in, each lends a peculiar colour and quality. Arturo Giovannitti gives something that Robert Frost could not give; Carl Sandburg something not to be looked for from Edwin Arlington Robinson; James Oppenheim and Alter Brody what would not have come from Indiana or Kansas. Such a fusion of course takes a long time. The great myths and legends and histories of the Britons lay unworked for centuries in Anglo-Saxon England before the Normans saw them and built them into beauty. Eventually, unless the world changes in some way quite new to history, the fusion will be accomplished. But in the meantime experimentation and exploration and excavation must be kept up. We must convert our necessities into virtues; must, lacking the deep soil of memory, which is also prejudice and tradition, cultivate the thinner soil which may also be reason and cheerfulness. Our hope lies in diversity, in variety, in colours yet untried, in forms yet unsuspected. And back of all this search lie the many cultures, converging like immigrant ships toward the Narrows, with aspirations all to become American and yet with those things in their different constitutions which will enrich the ultimate substance.

X. IN THE OPEN

AUGUST NIGHTS AND AUGUST DAYS

AT each new turning season I ask myself what annual phrase in the great epic of the year most pricks the senses: the stir of sap in the maples, the earliest robin coldly foraging across a bare lawn, crocuses or cowslips or trailing arbutus in the muddy wood-lot, grass appearing along a hundred borders, willow bark suddenly ripe for whistles, garden soil warm and dry enough to risk seed in it, apple blossoms and lilacs lifting the soul like music with their fragrance—the bright, young, green procession from March's equinox to June's accomplished solstice; or the higher pomps of summer, red and yellow—berries luxuriant on the hills, wheat in the head, corn haughty with the pride of its stature, meadow-larks that cry continually as cherubim, evenings spangled with fireflies and alive with shrill bats and angry night-hawks and repining frogs, the spare smell of mown hay, keen acrid dust flung through light air by the lean hands of drouth; or golden, purple, imperial autumn—the incredible blue of fringed gentians, apples compliant to hungry hands, grapes dewy and fresh on tingling mornings, gardens bequeathing their wealth to ready cellars, birch fires crackling on a hearth which had nearly forgotten them, leaves so

scattered underfoot that every pedestrian sounds like a marching army, wild geese off for the south with eager bugles, a frost transmogrifying the world in a night; or white and black and dusky winter—sounds heard muffled over deadening snow, the gorgeous privacy of long nights, the sweet, bitter coldness of cheeks when the blast strikes them, blood triumphantly warmed by exercise even in zero weather, the crisp flesh of fruit dug from pits hid deep underground, the ringing blades of skates, the malicious whine of sleigh runners, fat companionable snow-birds with an eye on the pantry window, barns warm with the breath of ever-ruminant cows: which is best? Is there any choosing? Should we all vote for the nearest? Perhaps that is what I do when in this season I make my choice for the sundowns of August, which, by some keenness in the winds that then waken, clearly though not too brusquely prophesy, in the midst of a consoling splendour, that the epic has an end: August of the blazing noons, August of the cool nights.

. . . . . .

The most blazing August on the heels of the most pitiless July has no terrors for the man or woman who knows Herrick and can turn from torrid cities to the meadows and brooks and hawthorn-guarded cottages of Herrick's dainty Devon. He rises for ever with the dawn and summons his perennial Corinna, "sweet Slug-a-bed,"

To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and greene;
And sweet as Flora.

Love itself cannot inflame his morning worshippers: they walk through the early streets to the woods of May, courting one another exquisitely with all the forms of a ceremonial which Horace might have sung or Watteau painted. Here, in one bright season, are daffodils and violets, primroses and gilliflowers,

Millions of Lillies mixt with Roses,

tulips, pansies, marigolds, daisies, the cherry and the oak, laurels and cypresses, grapes and strawberries, spring standing side by side with purple harvest and cozy winter. Here are all exquisite scents, new rain on turf and tree, the smoke of quaint poetical sacrifices;

The smell of mornings milk, and cream;
Butter of Cowslips mixt with them;
Of rosted warden, or bak'd peare;

"the flowre of blooming Clove," "Essences of Jessimine," honey just brought in by bees, spiced wines, incomparable possets; the perfumes of youth and love and joy. Here, too, are delicate forms and precious colours, smooth narratives of a hundred rural customs chosen because they fit fine verses, and whimsical pious little odes and graces before meat and thanksgivings and creeds and prayers such as no other poet

ever uttered. Nowhere else has adoration better lent itself to union with politeness than in this counsel to children:

> Honour thy Parents; but good manners call
> Thee to adore thy God, the first of all.

Surely something ran in Herrick's veins which was calmer than the hot blood of his kind in general. He laughs at Julia, Sapho, Anthea, Electra, Myrha, Corinna, Perilla, and at himself for having had and lost them; he tricks out his raptures of devotion with the blithest figures of speech:

> Lord, I am like to Misletoe,
> Which has no root, and cannot grow,
> Or prosper, but by that same tree
> It clings about; so I by Thee;

he takes his ease in his country Zion as if it would last eternally and yet amuses himself with cheerful epitaphs for himself and with advice to his pretty mourners. He could be passionate enough about his calling; but he saw his world as images of marble, as pictures of gold set in silver, as charming ancient stories come to life again yet still with the dignity of remembered perfectness about them. It is a defence against August to remember the happy commentary upon Herrick which Dryden wrote when he imitated the lines to Perilla—

Then shall my Ghost not walk about, but keep
Still in the coole, and silent shades of sleep—

in that admirable invitation to another cool world:

When, tired with following nature, you think fit
To seek repose in the cool shades of wit,

LAKE AND BIRD

I had one perfect day during one imperfect week-end. I woke immensely early to a morning full of birds on a rough hill sloping down from an old Berkshire parsonage by many ways and windings to the devious Housatonic. I went dabbling on my knees among innumerable daisies and buttercups and black-eyed Susans to find enough wild strawberries for my breakfast, and ate them with reckless oceans of cream kept the night in a spring so cold that on the most tropic days vessels come up from it clouded and beaded. I neglected the newspapers all day, hoeing and joyfully baking in my garden in the confident expectation of a blessed reward. And then at six precisely, by the sun, not the clock, I slipped, with some splashing, be it admitted, for my dive was eager, into the cool, sweet, quiet, well-sunned, but still tonic waters of an unforgettable lake. Repaid by the first keen shock for the whole day's scorching, I shouted and ploughed to a deeper pool I know, where the water is never troubled and where now its crystal loneliness was broken by nothing but a few pink laurel-blossoms wind-shaken down upon it. Here I drifted, halcyon for that day, and waited. Not too late it came, the timid challenge, the flaunting confession, the liquid lament, the whistled prayer of the hermit thrush, puls-

ing through the replying air. I let the spell take me, and lay for a long while at the summit of rapture, not quite sure which was I, which was calm lake, and which was radiant bird.

As I hurried down the muddy road I saw fireflies ahead of me splashing the new darkness. And then suddenly the scene widened. On my left a broad meadow rolled away up the mountain; on my right lay a broader region of marshy ground sacred to flags and frogs. I knew that over all that green meadow buttercups were contending with daisies which should make it white or yellow, but now it was black with the night though somehow brightened by the gleaming mist. In the swamp, too, I knew there would soon be irises blooming, though now it had nothing but the paler iridescence of the quiet drizzle. And yet the night was alive with an uncanny and unaccustomed splendour. The fireflies were holding some sort of carnival, it seemed, moving up and down the meadow slope in glimmering processions and swarming thickly over the marsh which they almost illuminated with their fitful and inclusive flashes. There must have been thousands of them, for the usual intervals of darkness never came, and every instant was spangled. But the marvel of the occasion was not the number of lights but the magnitude of them. By some trick of the mist, some reflection from the particles of water suspended in the air, every firefly shone not as a vivid speck but as a slow,

large, bland splotch of mellow light. Over the swamp they were so crowded and cast so many reflections upon the water and wet earth and dripping flags that they had created the perfect semblance of a lake on which numberless canoes rode softly with dancing lanterns. Up the mountain meadow they seemed, and doubtless were, less numerous, but the wonder continued, for they glowed here and there on the rising hillside like searchers beating through the grass for something lost. And, most exquisite of all, now and then on the high ridge of the hill behind the meadow a lantern would flash and move down into the carnival or up out of it. This hollow of the hills was a cup of light, filled to the brim, which continually spilled over only to be replenished by these bright creatures of the dark.

GARDENS

In any winter of our discontent let us think of gardens. The sun looks north again, March is stirring somewhere, and in a few stubborn weeks there will be another green spring with loud, cheerful robins, insistent grass, and buds ready to turn pink or white at the warm touch of the advancing season. We have lived long enough on the stores we laid up from the harvest of last year. Like bears, we have grown thin in our hollow trees and must resume our occupations. Too much winter can destroy the genial sap that spring annually renews in the veins of men as surely as in trees. Cities, which have built strong barriers against the seasons, forget them, but they bring morals no less than weather. The seasons are teachers that never cease teaching, and examples that never fail to move us. Our tempers follow the sun.

Though it is true that the senses relax and ripen in a garden, a garden is more than a sensual delight. Roses grow there, and radishes; so does patience. That man who puts seed into a furrow at the same moment tucks his hand through the crooked elbow of Time and falls into step. He knows he must abide the days, must endure hot and cold, wet and dry, the ups and downs of immeasurable nature. Infected al-

most at once with peace, he feels his will surrendering its fretful individuality to the ampler cause with which he has involved his fortunes. He sees that he cannot profitably scold the rain; he cannot wear a chip on his shoulder and dare the wind to knock it off. The stature of his will shrinks when he learns how little he means to the rain or the wind, and the stature of his wisdom increases. Vigilant of course he must remain. He must take quick advantage of sunshine, as sailors do of the tides. He must foreknow the storm by its signs. In the long run, his prosperity will depend upon his eyes and hands, but he will be aware that he thrives by virtue of the patience with which he tends a process which is ageless and immortal.

Nor will he be patient merely for hours or months. As the seasons depart and recur year after year, he will begin to realize what centuries mean, epochs, and aeons. It is the weather which varies, not the seasons. The gardener in his little plot looks out less feverishly at elections and revolutions than other men. He has seen clouds before and has lived through them confident of the sun. From an experience stronger than dogma he knows that just after night there is dawn, and that every winter is succeeded by a spring. What in another might be a shallow optimism is in him a faith rooted in subsoil and bedrock, bred and nourished in the vast, slow, undeviating habits of soil and sky. He is conservative because he has seen the seasons perennially pass one into the other without convulsions. He is radical

because each spring he has had to set the spade into his sleepy ground, has had to tear it open and establish the new harvest on fresh seed. Others may stutter about the strife of old and new, but the gardener sees old and new eternally linked together with human toil. He perceives that history continues, for he has observed the grass. He understands, not dimly but certainly, that the tread of armies or the din of melting dynasties and shattered governments may indeed touch him in his garden, may even drive him forth into desolation, but that the work of the garden and the duty of the gardener will go on. To the end of the world there must be seed and toil and harvests.

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